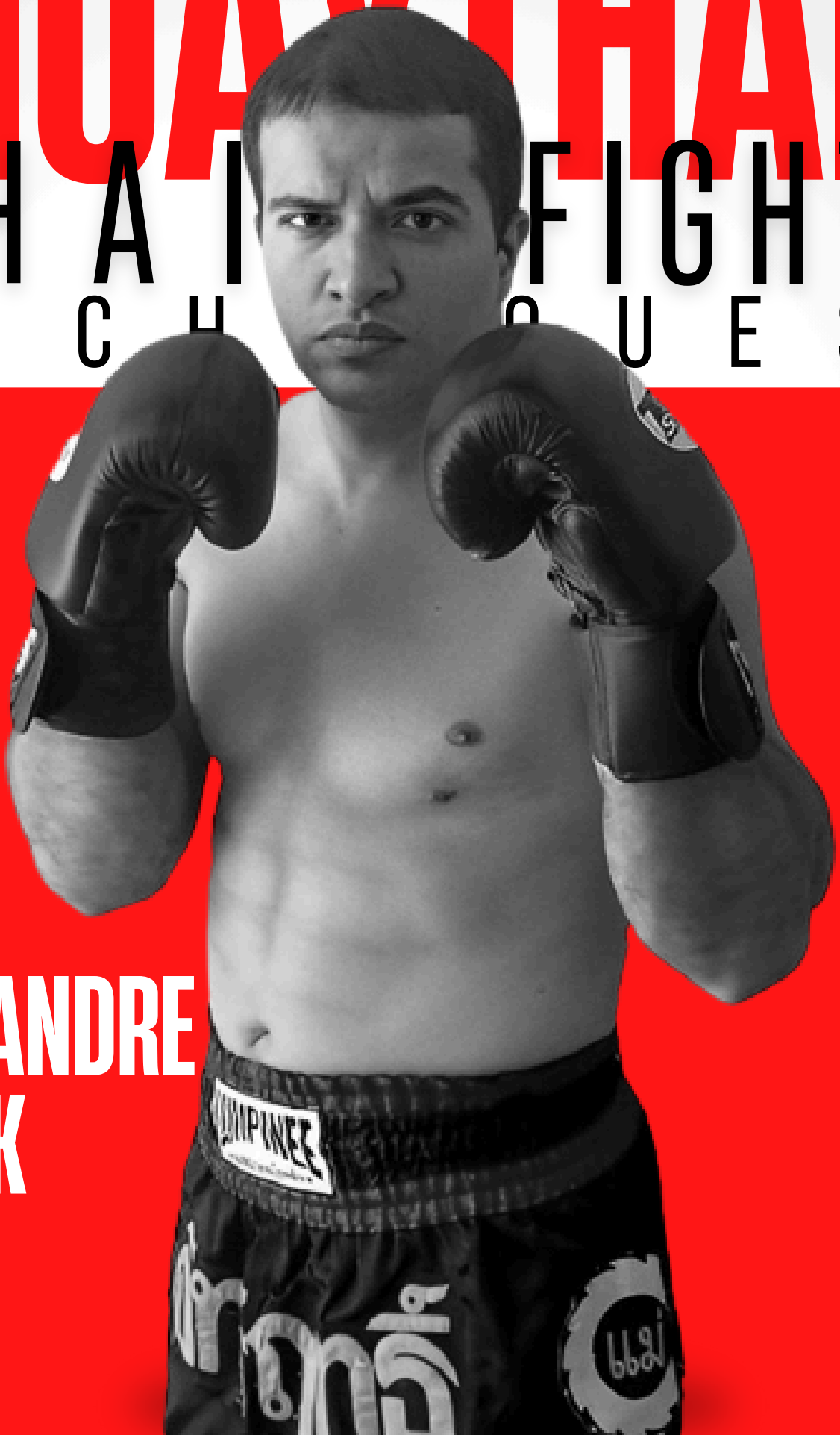
BOOK

MUAYTHAI

THAI FIGHT

TECHNIQUES



ALEXANDRE BRECK

MUAY THAI CHRONOLOGY

MUAY THAI HISTORY

MuayThai in the Sukhothai Era

Thailand's capital was situated at Sukhothai from around the Buddhist years 1781-1951 (1238-1408 CE). Inscriptions in stone columns at Sukhothai indicate that Sukhothai fought with its neighbors quite often. Consequently, the city had to instill in her soldiers knowledge and skills concerning the use of weapons such as swords and spears, and also how to use the body as a weapon in situations of close person-to-person combat. Skills such as kicking, kneeing, punching, and elbowing were thus developed. During peacetime, young men in Sukhothai practiced MuayThai to build character and their self-defense skills. These skills would serve them well during their time in the military and thus the practice of MuayThai became a good custom. MuayThai training centers arose around the city, for example, the Samakorn Training Center in Lopburi. Some were in temple areas where monks doubled as instructors. During this period, MuayThai was considered a higher art and was a part of the royal curriculum. It was intended to develop good and brave warriors with great physical fitness into great and brave rulers. The first King of Sukhothai, Phokhun Sri In Tharatit, believed in the benefits of MuayThai so much that he sent his two sons to train MuayThai at the Samakorn Training Center to prepare them to take the throne. In B.E. 1818-1860 (1275-1317 CE) Phokhun Ram Khamhaeng wrote a war text that included the teachings of MuayThai as well as instruction in other fighting skills.

MuayThai in the Krungsri Ayutthaya Era

The Ayutthaya Era lasted from B.E. 1988-2310 (1445-1767 CE). This period was characterized by frequent wars between Thailand, Burma, and Cambodia. Therefore, young men had to prepare themselves by developing self-defense skills. These skills were taught by experienced masters. The training spread from the Royal Palace out to the public. The Phudaisawan Sword Training Center was very famous in that era, and it had many pupils. They were trained with wicker swords in the arts of sword and pole fighting. They were also trained to fight barehanded and thus learned MuayThai skills. In addition to fighting, such training centers also gave education in everyday matters.

King Naresuan The Great Era (B.E. 2133-2147, 1590-1604 CE)

King Naresuan would call for young men of his age to train with him. They were trained to be brave, self-confident warriors. They had to be skilful with all weapons and in boxing. King Naresuan set up the Scouting Corps to fight in guerrilla warfare. It was this Corps of soldiers that were able to free Thailand from Burma during this time.

SKing Narai The Great Era (B.E. 2147-2233, 1604-1690 CE)

During this period Thailand was very much at peace and there were many developments in the Kingdom. King Narai supported and promoted sports, especially MuayThai, which became a professional sport. At this time there were many boxing training centers. The boxing ring was set up in regular playgrounds where a rope would be laid out in a square shape to indicate the fighting area. Boxers wrapped their hands with threads that were dipped in thick starch or tar. This technique was called Kad-Chuck (wrapped with threads) or Muay Kad-Chuck (boxing with thread-wrapped hands). Boxers wore a head band, called the mongkon, and an amulet, or pa-pra-jiat, wrapped around their upper arms when they fought. Boxers did not fight according to weight, height, or age. The rules were simple: Fights lasted until there was a clear winner. Gambling accompanied the bouts. Villages would often challenge each other to boxing matches and boxing became an activity central to folk plays and festivals.

King Prachao Sua Era (B.E. 2240-2252, 1697-1709 CE)

King Prachao Sua, also known as the Tiger King as well as Khun Luang Sorasak, loved MuayThai very much. Once he went, dressed in plain clothes, to a district called Tambol Talad-guad with four royal guards. There he entered a boxing competition. The promoter did not recognize the King, but knew that the boxer came from Ayutthaya. He let the King fight against very good fighters from the town of Wisetchaichan. They were Nai Klan Madtai (killing fists), Nai Yai Madlek (iron fists), and Nai Lek Madnak (hard fists or punches). The Tiger King won all three fights. King Prachao Sua also trained his two sons, Prince Petch and Prince Porn, in MuayThai, sword fighting, and wrestling. During the early part of the Ayutthaya period the Department of Royal Boxing was founded. One of its responsibilities was to recruit young talented boxers to fight for the King's entertainment. The top boxers were chosen for the Royal Quarries, called Thani Lir (chosen guards). They were responsible for the security of the royal palace and the King at all times. These boxers were to become the boxing masters who trained the soldiers and the Princes. In the later part of the Ayutthaya Period, after the second loss to Burma in B.E. 2310 (1767 CE), there was one boxer of note.

Nai Khanomtom

Nai Khanomtom was a prisoner of war captured by the Burmese when Ayutthaya was sacked for the second time in B.E. 2310 (1767 CE). In B.E. 2317 (1774 CE), the Burmese King, King Angwa, wanted to hold a celebration for the Great Pagoda in Rangoon. Boxing was included in the celebrations. Good Thai boxers were called on to fight with Burmese boxers. On the 17th of March of that year, Nai Khanomtom fought and defeated 10 Burmese boxers in succession with no rest period between fights. It was the first time that MuayThai was used in competition outside of Thailand. For his achievements, Nai Khanomtom was honored as the Father or MuayThai or the Inventor of MuayThai, and the 17th of March is now named MuayThai Day.

MuayThai in the Thonburi Period

The Thonburi period extended from B.E. 2310-2324 (1767-1781 CE). It was a period of reconstruction after the restoration of peace in the Kingdom. MuayThai training was primarily for man-to-man conflict during wars and or military service. The arrangement of competitive boxing bouts during that period involved the matching of different training camps, usually from remote areas of the country. There is no evidence of rules or regulations, and it is thought that boxers fought without any official points system. So, they would fight until one dropped or gave up, leaving the man standing as the obvious winner. Bouts took place on open grounds, mostly in temple areas. Boxers wrapped their hands and wrists in thread, wore a head band or mongkon, and an amulet or pa-pra-jiat usually around their right arm.

MuayThai in Ratanakosin Period

The first era of this period encompasses the rule of King Rama I to King Rama IV (B.E. 2325-2411, 1782-1868 CE). At this time, MuayThai was considered the national fighting art. It was an essential part of every festival. Eventually, it was decided that rules and regulations were necessary, especially regarding the length of rounds. An intriguing method of timekeeping was then developed. A coconut shell would have a hole punched in it and be floated in a water tank. When the coconut shell sank, a drum signaled the end of the round. There was no limit to the number of rounds, so the boxers fought until there was a clear winner or until one of them gave up.

King Rama I Period

Pra Puttha Yord Fa Chula Loke, The Great (B.E. 2325-2352, 1782-1809 CE)

King Rama I, himself, trained as a boxer from a very early age. He expressed keen interest in, and often watched, boxing matches. In B.E. 2331 (1788 CE), two foreigners, brothers who traveled around the world trading goods, arrived in Bangkok. The younger of the two proved to be quite a good boxer and won prizes from matches around the world quite often. He told Pra Ya Pra Klang that he wanted to fight for prizes against Thai boxers. This request was relayed to King Rama I and, after consulting with Pra Raja Wangboworn, the Director of the Boxing Department, a bet of 50 changs (4,000 Baht) was agreed upon. Pra Raja Wangboworn selected a good boxer named Muen Han to fight the foreigner in a ring set up behind the Temple of the Emerald Buddha at the Grand Palace. It was 20 by 20 meters square and there was a reception area set up nearby. The fight was not to be scored, but to continue until a decisive winner emerged. Before the fight, Muen Han was oiled with herbal ointment, and he wore amulets on his upper arms. He was then carried to the ring on the shoulders of a friend. When the fight began, it was clear that the foreigner was much heavier, taller, and stronger than Muen Han. When the foreigner got in close he employed wresting tactics to try to break the Thai boxer's neck and collarbone. To counter these tactics, Muen Han tried kicking and using stepping kicks. He tried to control the fight and his footwork was very quick. Eventually, the foreigner began to tire and it seemed he was going to lose. His brother, realizing this, jumped into the ring to help his younger brother.

This caused a riot to break out among the spectators. Many foreigners were injured. The two brothers, after recovering from their injuries, left Thailand.

King Rama II Period

King Pra Buddha Lert La Napa-Lai (B.E. 2352-2367, 1809-1824 CE)

While young, this King trained as a boxer at Bang Wa Yai Training Center (Wat Rakangkositaram) with the boxing master, and army general, Somdet Prawanarat (Tong You). At age 16, he learned more about MuayThai from the Boxing Department. He changed the sport's name from its previous name, Ram Mad Ram Muay, to MuayThai.

King Rama III Period

King Pra Nangklao (B.E. 2367-2394, 1824-1851 CE)

King Rama III learned MuayThai from the Boxing Department. During his reign, Thai boys loved to fight, and they learned MuayThai and the sword of Khun Ying Moe. Khun Ying Moe is renowned for leading many brave women to defeat the invading soldiers of Prince Anuwong from Vientienne, Laos, who were attacking the city of Korat.

King Rama IV Period

King Chomklao (B.E. 2394-2411, 1851-1868 CE)

When young, King Rama IV loved to dress himself up as a boxer. He also loved sword and pole fighting. Often, he would box and compete in sword and pole fighting during festivals in the grounds of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha. During this time, Thailand saw the growth of western sports and culture. However, MuayThai remained a popular activity and a strong symbol of Thai culture.

King Rama V Period

King Chulachomklao (B.E. 2411-2453, 1868-1910 CE)

King Rama V learned MuayThai from the Boxing Department with boxing master Luang Pola Yotanuyoke. The King loved MuayThai and loved watching boxing matches. From time to time he would order Royal officers to arrange for good boxers to fight for him. Such tournaments were used to recruit men for His Majesty the King's Royal Guards. King Rama V recognized the value of MuayThai. In order to promote interest in Thai sports, the King encouraged MuayThai tournaments. He also encouraged the promotion of Muay Luang, or royal boxing centers to train youngsters. These Muay Luang also organized and controlled MuayThai tournaments. The royal office would also send official invitations to the heads of Muay Luang inviting their boxers to participate in particular events and festivals.

Winners at such events were promoted by His Majesty the King to a position callen 'Muen', or first-rank officer. In B.E. 2430 (1887 CE), King Rama V established the Department of Education. MuayThai was a subject in the curriculum of the physical education teacher's training school and at Prachufachomktao Royal Military Cadet School. This period is considered the golden age of MuayThai.

King Rama VI Period

King Mongkhut Klao Chao Yu Hua (B.E. 2453-2468, 1910-1925 CE)

During this period, Thailand went to World War I. The Thai army was stationed in France with General Praya Dhepasadin as Commander. He loved MuayThai and he organized a bout to entertain the European servicemen and laymen. They enjoyed the bout very much and thus was born European interest in MuayThai. In B.E. 2464 (1921 AD), after the war, the first permanent boxing stadium was built on the football ground at Suan Khulab School. It was named the Suan Khulab Boxing Stadium. At first, spectators would sit or stand around the ring. The ring itself was a square, 26 meters by 26 meters. Boxers wrapped their hands with cotton threads, wore a head band or mongkon, and an amulet or pa-pra-jiat around their upper arms. They wore shorts with a protective cup and their waists were belted by a long piece of cloth. They wore neither a shirt nor shoes. The referee would wear an old style Thai dress uniform with a royal white shirt and white socks. One great fight from this period was between Muen Mad Man, aged 50, and Nai Pong Prabsabod, a tall man aged 22 who came from Korat. The younger man fought to avenge the death of his father who was killed in a bout with Muen Mad Man that took place at the funeral of Khun Marupongsiripat. Two minutes into the grudge match, Muen Mad Man was knocked out by Nai Pong. The spectators became very excited and went mad trying to congratulate Nai Pong. It took some time for the situation to calm down. This kind of scene was clearly a problem and a committee was set up to solve it. Finally, it was decided that the ring should be raised to a height of four feet above the ground, be covered with grass mats tied together, and surrounded by a 1 inch think rope. There was to be a space for each boxer to enter the ring near its corner. The referee began wearing a full scouting uniform and there was now a time keeper with two watches. A drum was used as the round signal and a match was established at 11 rounds of three minutes each. Boxers were to break when the referee so ordered, and it was now forbidden to bite one's opponent or to attack him while he is falling. Boxers had to go to a neutral corner when their opponent fell down. Music for the fights was played by the orchestra of Muen Samak Siangprachit.

King Rama VII Period

King Pok Klaochao Yu Hua (B.E. 2468-2477, 1925-1934 CE)

General Dhepasadin built a boxing stadium called Lak Muang at Tachang (near the present day National Theatre). The ring rope was thicker and tighter and without a space to protect the boxers. Bouts were organized regularly. In B.E. 2472 (1929 CE) governmental orders required all boxers to wear boxing gloves. Boxing gloves were introduced to Thailand by a Philippine boxer who came to Thailand for an international boxing match. Prior to the introduction of boxing gloves there was a tragic and fatal accident when Nai Pae Liangprasert from Ta Sao, Uttaradit province, killed Nai Jia Kakamen in a boxing match which was fought in the Kad-Chuck style where boxers' hands were wrapped in cotton strips. In November B.E. 2472 (1929 CE) Chao Khun Katatorabodee first organized a boxing bout along with other festivities at a fun park in Lumpini Park. He chose only good boxers to fight every Saturday. An educated and worldly man, he built an international standard boxing ring with three ropes and a canvas floor. There were red and blue corners, two judges, and a referee in the ring. It was here that a bell was first used as the round signal. To celebrate on New Year's Eve of that year, a match was scheduled between Samarn Dilokwilas and Det Poopinyae, accompanied by a special bout between Nai Air Muangdee and Nai Suwan Niwasawat. Nai Air Muangdee was the first boxer to use a metal protective cup. It has since been in general use.

King Rama VIII Period

King Ananddhamahidol (B.E. 2477-2489, 1934-1946 CE)

Between B.E. 2478-2484 (1935-1941 CE), a rich and well-known man built a boxing stadium on Chao Chate's ground. It was called Suan Chao Chate Boxing Stadium. At present it is the Department of Reserved Officers Training Corps. The stadium was run by military personnel and it did very good business. Some of the income was donated to support military activities. After several years, the Second World War broke out. At that time the boxing stadium was closed. Japanese troops arrived in Thailand on December 8 B.E. 2484 (1941 CE). From B.E. 2485-2487 (1942-1944 CE), while the war was still going on, boxing bouts were organized in movie theaters during the daytime. There were boxing stadiums at Patanakarn, Ta Prachan, and Wongwian Yai where the public could be entertained. On the 23rd of December, B.E. 2488 (1945 CE), Ratchadamnern boxing Stadium was opened officially. Mr. Pramote Puengsoonthorn was its chairman and Praya Chindharak was its administrator. The promoter was Mr. Chit Ampolsin (Kru Chit). Bouts were organized every Sunday from 4 to 7 p.m. The rules were those of the Department of Physical Education. Bouts were five three-minute rounds in length, with two minutes rest between rounds. The boxers were weighed by stone. Two years later, weight was measured in kilograms, and in B.E. 2491 (1948 CE) pounds were adopted as the measure of a boxer's weight so as to be in accord with international standards. Divisions were assigned by weight, for example, not over 112 pounds. International names were given for each weight group, such as flyweight, and bantamweight. Matches were arranged to select a champion for each class, following the international style. Many additions have been made to the regulations of Muay Thai. It is forbidden now to hit the private parts since this technique has become quite infamous as a form of attack and is considered debasing for the fine art of Thai boxing. Muay Thai remains a national art form. If all parties concerned help to uplift and conserve this form of martial arts, and pass it onto following generations, it will remain a valuable possession of the Thai nation.

AMULET

AMULET AND MUAY THAI

Superstitious belief has long been existed in Thai society since the ancient time. The miracle power has influenced every walk of life and every sort of arts including arts of fighting or Muay Thai.

In the realm of Thai boxing, like any other vocational Thai practices, teachers are the person to be respected to the utmost as they are the creators of the arts. Students must always be obedient, polite and grateful to their teacher. Teachers not only spread their knowledge and technique to students, but they also instruct boxers to cite magic spell. Before the match starts, teachers also give their fighters the protective incantation to make sure of the power and strength. Many ancient Thai drawings can clearly prove this practice. The drawing of Thai warriors during battle shows the magical signs, letters and numbers imprinted on their shirts and tattoos on their body. These protective charms are believed to help protect them from arrow, sword and bullets.

Unfortunately, the belief in the ancient charms has been weakened as they have been used by those with mischievous purposes. However, some of the belief remains until present as followed.

Head Bands or Mongkon

Boxers wear Mongkon in their rite called "Wai Kruu" before the match begins. In this ritual, the aim of which is to pay homage to the Muay-Thai teacher, boxers perform a special boxing dance. The trainer will then remove Mongkon when this dance ends.

Mongkon is invented by practitioners of Muay Thai. Its main part is a narrow strip of cloth resembling a finger-thick cord which is imprinted with magical letters and signs. It is tied with a sacred sewing thread called SaiSin and covered with a second cloth strip blessed by a magical master. Last but not least, it is twisted into a helix and its ends are tied together into a tail. When Mongkon is put on the boxers head, the tail extends from the back of the head. However, some Mongkons are simply made of a coil of plain rope.

Mongkon is very popular among fighters in every region of Thailand. In the ancient time, you could tell which origin of each boxer by observing his Mongkon and boxing dance style but at present the difference is not that distinguishable. However, no matter which design it has, Mongkon is believed to provide an auspicious and protective charm to the fighters.

AMULET

Arm Bands or Prajied / Prajiet / Praciat

Another important protective charm is the Praciat. It is worn around boxers' biceps in the fight. It is made of a piece to thin white cloth called " Pha salu." It is usually in red. However, the color may be different depending on the preferences of the teacher or the type of protective charms.

It contains sacred symbols called "maha amnart" or "chatri mahayanta" blessed by the magic arts masters. In the ancient time, as illustrated in drawings, Thai warriors wore Praciat on their arms or head in the battlefield to miraculously prevent dangers.

There are also other superstitious beliefs regarding the art of boxing. For example, there was an anecdote about a woman who climbed in under the ropes and entered the ring before a match starts. It appeared that, without any reasons, the boxing matches that day lasted much shorter than before as every bout ended with a knockout because the boxers gained cuts. Since then, women have been banned inside the ropes.

MUSIC

MUSIC OF MUAY THAI: SARAMA (สะระหม่า)

Sarama, also known as Phleng Pi Muay Thai (**เพลงปี่มวยไทย**) or Phleng Muay (**เพลง มวย**), which translates to "Music for Fighting," plays a fundamental role in accompanying Muay Thai fights in Thailand. This musical style is not just a soundtrack but an integral part of the atmosphere surrounding the fight, known for its vigorous rhythm and the way it energizes both fighters and the audience. This music is also referred to as Pii Muay (**ปี่มวย**).

History and Origin of Sarama

The music of Sarama has its roots in the royal court music of Thailand, where it was used in various ceremonies and important events. Over time, this music spread and began to be used on other occasions, especially in Muay Thai fights. It is believed that many of the instruments and musical styles associated with Sarama have influences from other cultures, including Indian and Javanese, due to trade routes and cultural exchanges throughout history. During the Ayutthaya period (1351 to 1767), Wong Pi Chawa Klong Khaek (**วงปี่ชวากลองแขก**) was a sacred music, modeled after the Javanese-Malay royal court and influenced by Indian musical traditions. At that time, this music was used in royal processions and reserved for the elite due to its high and clear tone, symbolizing authority. Later, it was adopted by common people and became part of everyday life.

Today, the music of Wong Pi Chawa Klong Khaek can be heard on various occasions, such as Muay Thai fights and during the Royal Barge Procession. Each melody and verse has a specific meaning and is played precisely at corresponding moments, such as different stages of Muay Thai fights or when the royal barge is about to dock. The Lumpinee Boxing Stadium, since its inauguration on December 8, 1956, has always featured a Pi-Muay orchestra.

Structure of Sarama

Sarama is divided into different parts, each with its specific purpose during competitions. It sets the tone and prepares the environment for the start of the fight. The fighters begin to focus and warm up mentally. During the Wai Kru Ram Muay, where the fighters perform ritual movements to honor their trainers, ancestors, and the sport itself, the music played is Yon-Plaeng (**โยน-แปลง**) or Plaeng Yoin Sarama Thai (**เพลงโยนในสะระหม่าไทย**). When the first round begins, the music's rhythm changes to Song Jao Zen (**เพลงเจ้าเซ็น**) or Khaek Chao Sen Song Chan (**แขกเจ้าเซ็นสองชั้น**). From the middle of the second round until the last round, the music changes to Ched Song (**เพลงเชิด**) or Khaek Chao Sen Prahm Khao Bot (**อัตราจังหวะสองชั้นทั่วไป**). In the final minutes of the last round, Cherd (**เชิด**) is played.
The rhythmic pattern played during the Wai Kru Ram Muay is the Na Tap Yoin (**หน้าทับโยน**) rhythm. The rhythmic pattern played throughout the fight, regardless of the music played by the Pi Chawa, is the Na Tap Khaek Chao Sen Song Chan (**หน้าทับแขกเจ้าเซ็นสองชั้น**), and the rhythmic pattern played in the final minutes of the fight is the Na Tap Cherd (**หน้าทับเชิด**).

Instrumentation and Pi Muay Band (วงปี่มวย)

Sarama music is played by a band known as the Pi Muay Band, composed of skilled musicians called Nak Dontri Pi Muay (**นักดนตรีปี่มวย**), also known as Wong Dontri Pi Muay (**วงดนตรีปี่มวย**) or Wong Pi Muay (**วงปี่มวย**), which translates to Pi Muay Musicians. The term "Pi Muay band" or Wong Pi Muay (**วงปี่มวย**) emerged when Muay Thai gained popularity, facilitating public understanding. The set of instruments used in the music is called the Pi Drum Circle (**วงปี่กลอง**) and includes the following:

Pi Chawa (ปี่ชวา)

Despite the name suggesting a Javanese origin, the Pi Chawa closely resembles Indian shehnai reeds and likely originated from the Indian subcontinent before being introduced to Thailand via trade routes passing through Java. The Pi Chawa is made of wood and has a conical shape similar to the Western oboe, with a flared bell. However, while the oboe uses a double reed, the Pi Chawa uses a quadruple reed. The body of the Pi: Made of real wood, divided into two parts. The first part is called the "body of the Pi," turned to be round and elongated, with a hollow interior. The base is slightly wider, separated by a sphere. Pi reed: Made from mature palm leaves, cut and folded into four blades, inserted into the end of the "mouthpiece," which is made of a small round and hollow metal tube, tied with a thin string, and secured with a special knot.

Pi Chawa (**ปี่ชวา**)

Klong Khaek (กลองแขก):

The klong khaek is a long cylindrical percussion instrument with two sides covered in calf or goat skin. The larger side, about 20 cm in diameter, is called "na rui" or "na mat" (**หน้ามัด**). The smaller side, about 15 cm in diameter, is called "na tan" or "na tad" (**หน้าตาด**). The drum body can be made from various types of wood, but it is usually made from hardwood, such as rosewood, teak, pterocarpus, buffalo wood, jackfruit tree, neem, mahogany, coconut tree, palm tree, and tamarind tree. The drum edge is made from split rattan, arranged in rings, and wrapped with leather, forming the drum edge along with the surface. It is tensioned with thin leather strips, called "nang ried," to adjust the sound of each side as desired.

Klong Khaek (**กลองแขก**)

Ching (ฉิ่ง)

The ching is a Thai percussion musical instrument made of thick cast brass with a round opening. A set of ching has two pieces. There are two types of ching: those used in the piphat orchestra and those used in the string and mahori orchestras. The ching in the piphat orchestra has a diameter that varies from 6 to 6.5 cm and has a hole in the center for a cord to pass through, facilitating handling during play. The ching used in the string and mahori orchestras is smaller, with a diameter of approximately 5.5 cm. Therefore, the name of this instrument, ching, refers to the sound it produces. It is also known by its full name "Ching Chap." The ching musician plays their own pattern "ching" in counterpoint to the "nathap" rhythmic pattern of the Klong Khaek. This pattern consists of four beats, alternated accordingly, with the "ching" beat being unaccented and the "chap" beat strongly accented, creating a pattern known as "ching chap ching chap."

Ching (**ฉิ่ง**)

Kong Mong (ฆ้องโหม่ง)

The Kong Mong is traditional from southern Thailand and consists of a large plate played with a wooden hammer. This instrument sets the rhythm for the melody.

Kong Mong (**ฆ้องโหม่ง**)

Importance and Function of Sarama

Sarama music starts slow and solemn during the Ram Muay and increases in rhythm and volume as the fight progresses, reflecting the growing intensity of the combat. It is more than just a soundtrack; it is a vital part of the Muay Thai experience, elevating the competitive spirit and creating a deep connection between fighters, musicians, and spectators.

Music for the Pre-Fight Ritual: Wai Kru Ram Muay

During the Wai Kru Ram Muay ritual, which is an essential part of the fighters' preparation, the music incorporates a specific section known as Yoan (โยน). This part is crucial as it accompanies the ritual movements of the fighters, honoring their trainers, ancestors, and the sport itself.
Sarama is not just music; it is a vital part of the culture and tradition surrounding Muay Thai, elevating the competitive spirit and the connection between fighters, musicians, and spectators in each thrilling encounter. The music that accompanies the pre-fight ritual of Muay Thai matches is a unique experience, setting Muay Thai apart from other international fighting styles and providing unparalleled cultural and emotional depth.

FIGHTING STYLES MUAYTHAI

WHAT ARE THE FIGHTING STYLES WITHIN MUAYTHAI?

The fighting styles within Muaythai represent tactical and behavioral patterns that fighters develop over the course of their careers. These styles are not limited to the frequent use of a particular technique, but rather encompass the strategic way a fighter behaves during a bout. In other words, they are tactical and strategic behavior categories adopted and refined over time.
It's important not to confuse a preference for certain strikes with a fighter's actual style. For example, a fighter who frequently uses kicks is not necessarily a Muay Tae unless his overall strategic approach, rhythm, and in-ring behavior align with that style. A true fighting style becomes evident throughout a fighter's career, as they specialize and refine their technical application within a cohesive tactical framework.
Below are the most well-known traditional Muaythai styles and some of their key representatives:

Muay Mat (หมัด – punch)

Muay Mat fighters are aggressive and aim for knockouts using powerful punches combined with devastating low kicks. This style emphasizes forward pressure and raw power. These fighters are feared for their ability to close the distance and explode with heavy strikes.
Example: Anuwat Kaewsamrit, known for his exceptional knockout rate.

Muay Khao (เข่า – knee)

Specializing in knee strikes, Muay Khao fighters use the clinch as their main offensive tool. They are known for their toughness, high endurance, and ability to dominate in close-range exchanges. The clinch game allows them to neutralize their opponents while punishing them with relentless knee strikes.
Example: Petchboonchu, one of the most decorated fighters of this style.

Muay Tae (เตะ – kick)

The hallmark of the Muay Tae style is the powerful roundhouse kick, executed with speed, accuracy, and refined technique. This style relies on excellent timing, balance, and distance control. Muay Tae fighters often keep their opponents at bay with repeated kicks that score effectively.
Example (not listed in the original): Yodsanklai Fairtex, renowned for his lethal kicks.

Muay Femur (ฉลาด – technician)

The Muay Femur style represents the pinnacle of Muaythai technical mastery. These fighters are strategic, intelligent, and adaptable, possessing exceptional skills in all areas kicks, knees, punches, clinching, defense, and counter-attacks. They are often considered artists in the ring, able to control the pace and confuse opponents with feints and creative movements.
Example: Saenchai, widely regarded as the greatest modern Muay Femur, praised for his genius in the ring.

Muay Dan / Muay Dtae (เดิน – forward-moving)

Muay Dan fighters are known for their constant forward pressure and relentless pace. Regardless of the situation, they keep moving forward, overwhelming their opponents. This style is a symbol of bravery and fighting spirit, demanding high physical and mental resilience.
Example: Pairojnoi, nicknamed "The Walking Machine" for his non-stop pressure style.

Muay Sok (ศอก – elbow)

Muay Sok fighters specialize in elbow strikes—devastating blows that often result in deep cuts and bloody fights. This is a highly aggressive and technical style that requires excellent close-range awareness, reflexes, and timing. These athletes thrive in brutal exchanges and know how to land surgical elbow strikes.
Example: Sayiok Pumphanmuang, known for his violent and memorable fights.

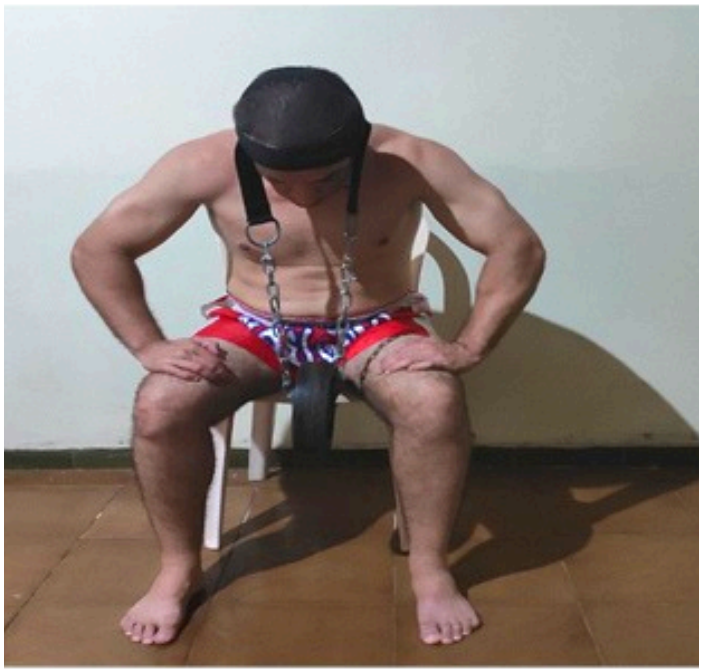
Muay Kwai (ควาย – buffalo)

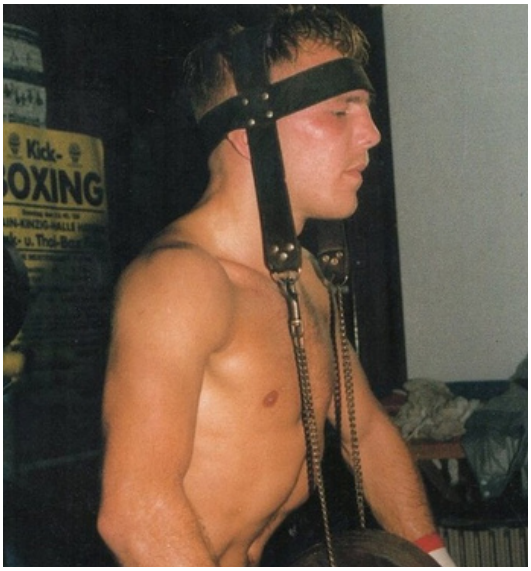
The Muay Kwai style is characterized by raw strength and minimal strategy. Fighters with this style move instinctively and aggressively, often advancing without much regard for defense or tactics. They are known for their heart, toughness, and excellent conditioning. However, due to their limited technical skills, they tend to be predictable and vulnerable to more refined fighters.
Example: Bovy Sor Udomson, a classic example of a strong, relentless fighter with limited technical ability.
Each Muaythai style reflects more than just a way of fighting—it's a combat identity forged through training, experience, personality, and adaptation to competition. Studying these styles allows us to better understand the sport, interpret fights with greater depth, and appreciate the true richness of Thai sport combat.

EXERCISE FOR MUAY THAI

NECK EXERCISE FOR MUAY THAI

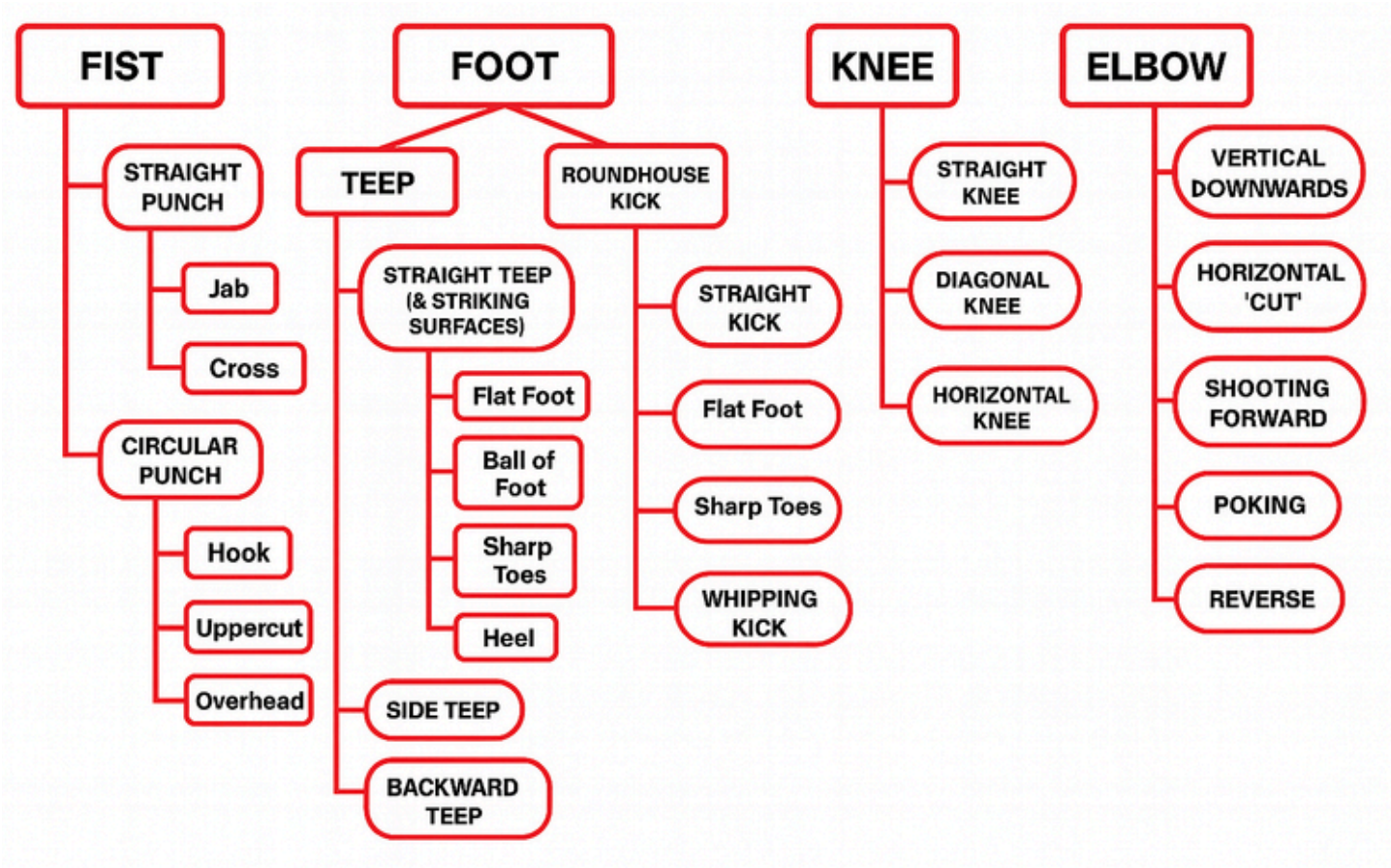
Neck workouts using weights are also a very popular way of increasing strength in this area. You may have seen picture of fighters such as Ramon Dekkers, Samart using weights in a neck harness, or the old-school Muay Thai method of holding weights with the teeth via a rope. The practitioner will look towards the floor before moving the neck up and down slowly to gain maximum effect. Ensure that you are careful when you are strengthening your neck in this fashion.





MUAY THAI TECHNIQUES

TECHNIQUES



LEVELS

In Muay Thai, accuracy is just as important as power. To better guide practitioners, the targets on the human body are divided into three main levels: low, middle, and high. This classification helps with attack and defense strategies during training and fights. In addition, it is common to distinguish between the upper part of the body (from the torso upward) and the lower part of the body (from the hips downward). This organization helps fighters and coaches develop more precise offensive and defensive strategies.

1. LOW TARGETS

Low targets correspond to the region from the hips downward:

- Thighs (inner and outer)
- Calves
- Knees

These attacks are usually carried out with low kicks, directed knee strikes, or even close-range punches. The objective is to reduce the opponent's mobility, weaken their base, and limit their ability to attack or defend.

2. MIDDLE TARGETS

Middle targets are located in the trunk area:

- Ribs
- Abdomen
- Liver and spleen
- Chest

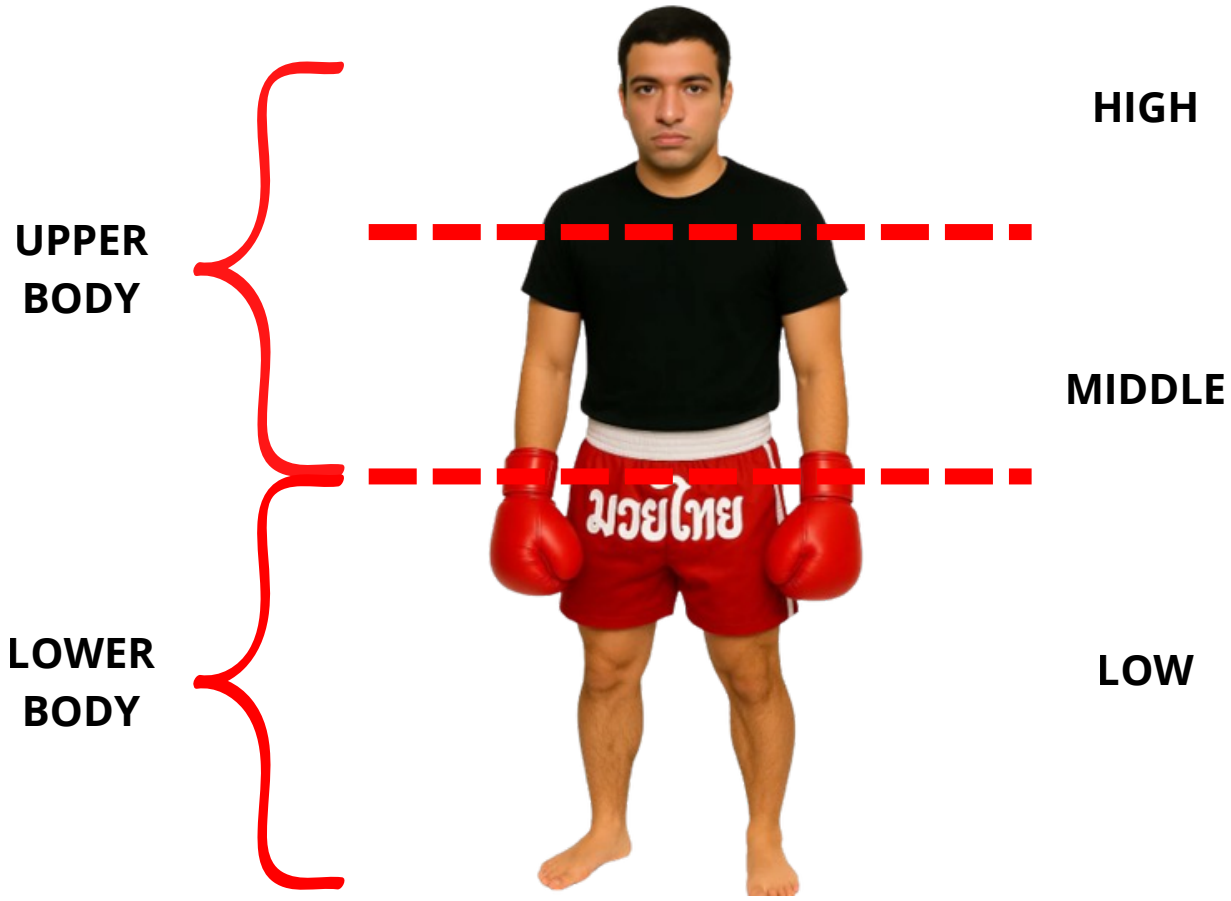
These are areas where strikes can cause major respiratory impact or energy loss. The most common attacks are round kicks, knee strikes, straight punches, and hooks. Targeting the midsection effectively can break down the opponent's physical resistance and open opportunities for strike combinations.

3. HIGH TARGETS

High targets include the head and neck region:

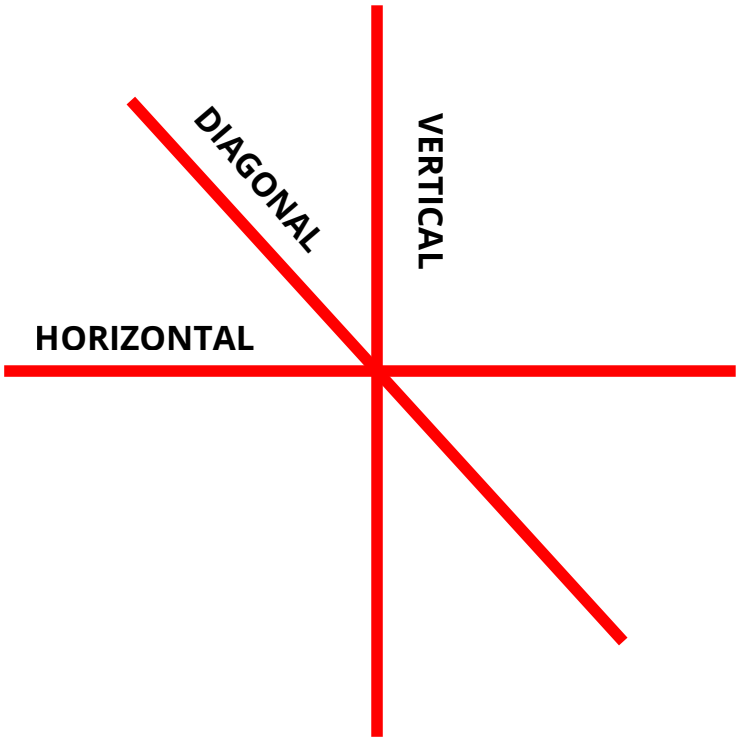
- Chin and jaw
- Nose
- Temples
- Neck

These are the most vulnerable areas, where strikes can result in knockdowns or knockouts. Common techniques include high kicks, elbows, straight punches, and uppercuts. Because they are decisive targets, they require precision, speed, and the right timing.
Understanding target levels is essential for developing both offense and defense in Muay Thai. A skilled fighter knows how to shift between the three levels, creating confusion for the opponent and increasing the chances of victory. All Muay Thai techniques are divided into high, medium and low.



Levels
Height levels pertaining to the body.

In Muay Thai, the directional angles of attacking and defending techniques are generally classified into three main lines: horizontal, diagonal, and vertical.



Directional Angles

In Muay Thai (and striking arts in general), the centerline is a crucial concept. The centerline is the imaginary axis of balance and vulnerability. Whoever controls the centerline usually controls the fight through straighter, faster attacks and tighter defense.

Centerline
Imaginary axis line down the center of your body.

RANGE

FIGHTING DISTANCE

A fighting distance is considered to be the range within your opponent's reach. No direct strike can be delivered from more than 1.5 meters (about 5 feet) away between individuals of average height. The attacker must first step toward the opponent, or even leap in their direction, before being able to land a strike. The opponent, however, can avoid the confrontation by stepping back or moving to the side.
If the fighters are not at a safe distance, they are within the so-called fighting distance, which is divided into three ranges: long, medium, and short. Your defense will change depending upon your range, or distance, from your opponent.

LONG DISTANCE

At this range, kicks are predominant—for example, front kicks, side kicks, and jumping kicks. To attack the opponent, one must first take a step forward. An effective way to close a long distance or create separation from the opponent is to combine a step with a jab. If you want to land a powerful kick, you can push your opponent out of the fighting distance being maintained.As you attack your opponent at the long range, the distance should give you the time to see his attacks, and defend by evasive movement and blocks.

MEDIUM DISTANCE

Punches, knees at range, and kicks are commonly used. Aggressive fighters prefer to stay at this distance to attack their opponent with multiple and varied combinations. The opponent may try to retreat and get out of range, or move forward to reduce the distance in order to initiate a clinch. Thai fighters often maintain medium distance, attempting to assess their opponent's strengths, weaknesses, and reactions. A medium range punching attack puts him close enough to potentially strike back before you can react. You should respond with a tighter defensive position, continuous movement and a blistering offense.

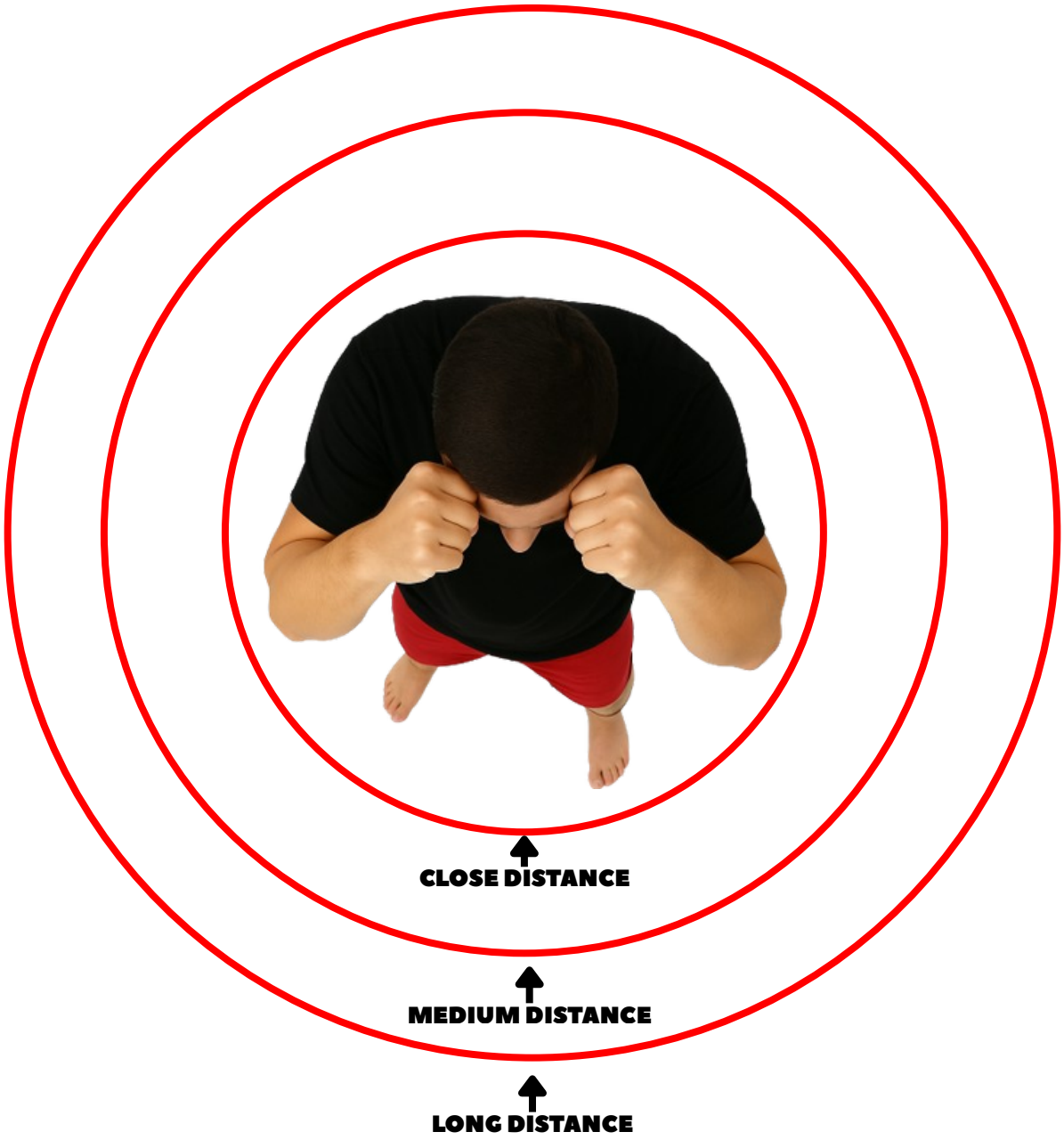
SHORT DISTANCE

This distance is mainly used for delivering hooks, elbows, and uppercuts. Such strikes are executed continuously until one fighter either manages to create space or grabs the other by the neck, leading into a clinch situation where knees and takedown techniques can be applied.

RANGE

FIGHTING DISTANCE

The personal attack range is the area around you broken down into three areas: close range, medium range, and long range. You are the nucleus contained within the three circle areas. As you move, the areas move with you, maintaining the same distance.
Learn what techniques you can perform in each range area to accomplish a successful attack. Learn to recognize when an opponent enters each range so that you can respond accordingly. The distance of the ranges will vary for each individual depending on size and reach.



Top View

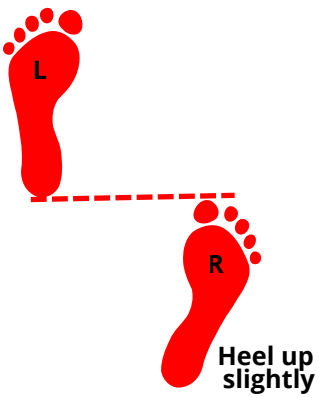
GUARD POSITION JOT MUAY (จดมวย)

JOT MUAY

Jot Muay (**จดมวย**) is a traditional Thai term that refers to a fighter's stance, guard, and tactical positioning during combat. The term "Jody Muay" refers to the action performed by a Nak Muay (Muay Thai practitioner) when assuming the fighting stance in order to be ready to attack or defend. More than just "being on guard," Jot Muay involves principles of balance, distance, readiness, and strategic intelligence serving as one of the fundamental bases of the classical style.

Elements of Jot Muay:

Head: Lower your head slightly so that your chin is tucked close to your chest.
Eyes: Always keep your eyes on your opponent, focusing on a single point to better evaluate their movements.
Arms: Both arms should be positioned laterally along the body to protect the ribs and abdomen.
Torso: Tighten the abdominal muscles while slightly bending the upper body forward. Keep your eyes and focus directly on the opponent.
Hands / Fists: Both hands should be raised to eyebrow level to protect the face. If you are right-handed, keep your left arm slightly in front of the right. If you are left-handed (southpaw), do the opposite. The fists are usually held parallel or angled outward. A hybrid position can also be used, depending on how each athlete adapts to the traditional Thai guard. The positioning of the feet should be comfortable—neither too far apart nor too close together. The lead foot must be pointed straight forward, while the rear foot should be angled no more than 45 degrees. However, many trainers require the rear foot to also face directly forward, rather than angled at 45 degrees.



Point left lead leg and foot straight forward. Point right rear leg and foot a little to the right at approximately a 45-degree angle with heel up slightly. Align left lead leg heel and right rear leg toes. Knees will maintain a very slight bend.
Weight distribution should be even between both legs.

MUAY THAI PUNCHING (CHOK)

JAB

JAB **หมัดหน้า/หมัดแย็บ** Mat na/Mat yaep

In Muay Thai, the jab (**หมัดตรงมือหน้า** Mat Trong Mue Na) is a quick, straight punch thrown with the lead hand. While it may seem simple, it's one of the most important tools in a Nak Muay's arsenal used for offense, defense, timing, and control.

Muay Thai Jab Key Details

Stance

Lead hand slightly in front, rear hand near the chin. Feet shoulder-width apart, lead foot forward, rear heel slightly lifted. Body weight evenly balanced or slightly forward.

Execution

Snap the lead hand straight forward from your guard.

Rotate the shoulder and hip slightly, extending the arm without overreaching.

Your palm usually faces down or slightly inward.

Retract the jab immediately after impact no pausing.

Step in with your lead foot if you're at longer range.

The rear hand should be kept beside the head for protection against possible counter strikes from the opponent.

MUAY THAI PUNCHING (CHOK)

UPPERCUT

(**หมัดเสย/หมัดสอยดาว**) Mat soei / Mat ngat

The uppercut (formerly known as the undercut) is a punch used in Muaythai that starts low and travels upwards vertically aiming at the opponent's chin or upper abdomen (so-called "solar plexus").
Uppercuts are useful when thrown at close range, because they are considered to cause more damage.The uppercut is a powerful punch capable of delivering a knockout strike. The punch moves as its name implies: it usually initiates from the attacker's belly, making an upward motion that resembles a pirate's hook in shape, before landing on the opponent's face or body.

Uppercut
(**หมัดเสย/หมัดสอยดาว**)
Mat soei / Mat ngat

MUAY THAI PUNCHING (CHOK)

CROSS/STRAIGHT

CROSS/STRAIGHT **หมัดตรง** Mat trong

WANG SAN MAD NAM **เหวี่ยงสั้นหมัดนำ** Crossed punch with the font hand

CROSS / STRAIGHT

(Straight Punch / Rear Hand Punch)

The Cross, also known as the Straight, is a powerful punch typically thrown with the rear hand (dominant hand) in a straight line toward the target. It is one of the most effective weapons in Muay Thai, boxing, and kickboxing.

Technical Characteristics:

Punching hand: rear hand (right for orthodox fighters, left for southpaws).
Trajectory: straight line from the chin to the target.
Target areas: chin, nose, or body of the opponent.
Body rotation: the hips and shoulders rotate with the punch, transferring power from the ground up through the fist.

CROSS/STRAIGHT **หมัดตรง** Mat trong

Key Execution Points:

Keep the lead hand guarding the face.
Use the rear leg to drive the punch, slightly pivoting the foot.
The elbow should stay aligned with the fist.
Quickly return to guard after the strike.

Three points of coverage

MUAY THAI PUNCHING (CHOK)

HOOK

MAT SAN MAD หมัดเหวี่ยงสั้น Mat Wiang San

WANG SAN MAD NAM **เหวี่ยงสั้นหมัดนำ** Crossed punch with the font hand
WANG SAN MAD TAM **เหวี่ยงสั้นหมัดตาม** Crossed punch with the back hand

In Muay Thai, the hook punch is a powerful circular punch commonly used at close to mid-range. While Muay Thai emphasizes elbows, knees, and kicks, Western boxing techniques like the hook are also heavily integrated especially in modern Muay Thai.
Stance and Positioning
Begin in your Muay Thai stance: hands high, elbows tucked, chin down.
The hook can be thrown with the lead hand (usually left) or rear hand (usually right).
Execution
Pivot your lead foot (for lead hook) or rear foot (for rear hook) slightly to generate torque from the hips.
Rotate your hips and shoulders into the punch. Elbow is usually in line with the fist or slightly higher. Keep your palm facing you (vertical fist) or palm down (horizontal fist), depending on style preference. Punch travels in a tight arc, aimed at the opponent's jaw, temple, or liver (for body hook).

For long range, the elbow hand should be horizontal. For short range, it should be vertical.

MUAY THAI PUNCHING (CHOK)

OVERHAND / SWING PUNCH

(**หมัดเหวี่ยงยาว**) Mat Wiang Yao / (**หวี่ยงสั้น**) Mat Wiang San

This page provides details for the Overhand Punch. The overhand punch is a circular rear hand punch that goes over an opponent's arm or block in order to hit the opponent. A mix between a cross and a hook, overhand punches are thrown at an angle and, as the name suggest, looping over your head from the rear hand at your opponents face. The mechanics are similar to a hook with the addition an overhead head arch in the elbow. It's important to land with your knuckles, return the arm quickly and keep a tight guard with the opposite hand due to the distance of travel and the ease with which an overhand can throw you off balance. To avoid counters and build momentum, lean (or step) towards your outside. When thrown properly, overhands are highly powerful and have plenty of knockout power.If your opponent is an experienced practitioner and sees the overhand coming, he can block the strike by dipping his head down. It is thrown much like a cross, except your fist is going to make an upward arc into your opponent's jaw.

MUAY THAI KICK (TE)

KICK

One of the main weapons in Muay Thai is its powerful kicking game. Kicks require coordinated movement of the hips and torso to generate greater force and stability in the strikes. Muay Thai fighters are trained to always strike with the larger medial bone below the knee the tibia since it is the hardest and most punishing part of the lower limb that can be used as a weapon.
The foot, on the other hand, contains numerous small and fragile bones, which makes it far more prone to injuries when used for striking.

This Muay Thai kick is used to target almost all body parts of the opponent. Round kicks have the following variations:

Low Kick: It mainly targets the inner or outer thighs and knee joints. It's a very powerful kick and considered as one of the most damaging in any form of martial art. It's like hitting the leg of the opponent with a baseball bat. When used correctly, this move can make the opponent fall, fetching you a big score in matches.

Mid Kick: It targets the torso, rib cage, and the arms. This round kick follows an attack on the opponent's This makes it difficult for the opponent to maintain a powerful defence for a long time. Repeated kicking of the arms also weakens the power of the opponent's punches. Also referred to as body kick, it's a trademark move in Muay Thai and it paves the way for a fight-ending high kick.

High Kick: It targets the head and neck. One of the most spectacular Muay Thai moves, it involves tricking the opponent to lower their guard before aiming for the head or neck. A high kick is a fight finisher.

LOW KICK

MID KICK

HIGH KICK

MUAY THAI KICK (TE)

LOW KICK / DOWN ROUNDHOUSE KICK

(เตะกด) Te kot

Low kicks target the body's widest and longest nerve: the sciatic nerve which starts at the lower back and continues through the thighs and legs, ending at the feet. Attacking this nerve can destabilize your opponent, resulting in a loss of dexterity and decreased mobility. The fighter can repeatedly target the lower leg and thighs and damage their opponent's muscles, bones, joints and ligaments. It's effective in breaking the opponent's will to fight and can stop attackers in their tracks.

To perform it effectively, you need to place your legs ahead of your body. Remember, the sciatic nerve is what you are aiming for, whether you go for the opponent's outer or inner thigh, groin, lower abdomen or knees. Although most fighters tend to go for the inner or outer thigh, you need to quickly decide which part you will go for. Once you have, pivot your left leg and swing the right to land the kick. Your body must move in the same direction. Then use your momentum to disable your opponent. Never let your guard down and remember to always protect your body and head from counterattacks. The main power of the kick, comes from the rotation of the body, rather than the actual kicking leg.

When people think of a kick, they impulsively try to generate all the power from extending the knee but the bulk of power comes from the rotation of the body and the transfer of weight.

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MUAY THAI KICK (TE)

DIAGONAL KICK

(เตะเฉียง) Te chiang

A diagonal kick uses the shin to target the upper thighs, back of the neck, arms, around the ears and lower part of the rib cage. It should ideally make a 45° angle against the floor to attain maximum efficiency and be performed by ensuring the instep of the back of the foot hits the target. Additionally, the body needs to be inclined towards the opposite direction of the kick. The leg is swung upward, and right before hitting the target, the foot needs to be twisted such that the arch faces down. This allows the fighter to hit the opponent effectively. Remember, the kick should be higher with the supporting leg, resulting in the body having more incline in the opposite direction.By stepping across with your left foot as you throw the right kick, you penetrate the opponent's "centre-line" by a much more significant amount.
By Stepping across and forwards – you load up the hip flexor for additional power
To execute a successful pivot, spin on the ball of one foot while the other foot swings around in a clockwise or counterclockwise direction.

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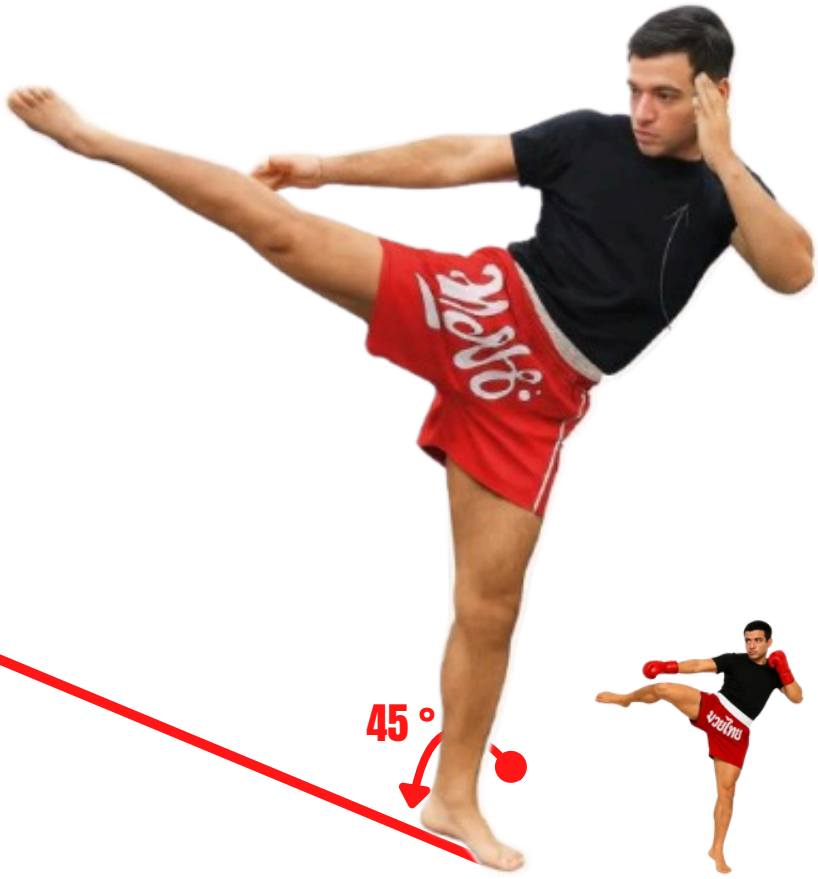
DIAGONAL KICK **เตะเฉียง** Te chiang

Weight Distributed To The Outer Balls of the Feet, Right Under the Big Toe



Sliding is used to cover a lot of ground in a short amount of time. A forward slide is executed by springing off your back foot, which sends your front foot gliding forward just above the ground.

(**เตะเฉียง**) Te chiang

Kick Zone

MUAY THAI KNEE (TI KHAO)

JUMPING ROUNDHOUSE KICK

(กระโดดเตะ) Kra-tote-teii

The Jumping Roundhouse Kick is an explosive technique performed from a fighting stance. The practitioner should slightly bend the knees, shift the body weight onto the supporting leg, and raise the knee of the kicking leg. Next, a quick jump is performed while rotating the hips to generate power. During the movement, the leg is extended in a circular path, striking the target with the shin or the top of the foot. After impact, the leg should be quickly retracted, and the landing must be balanced, immediately returning to the fighting stance. This technique requires coordination, balance, speed, and strong hip rotation to be effective.

MUAY THAI FOOT-THRUST (TEEP)

TEEP

(**ถีบ**) Thip

It is mainly used as a defensive technique to control distance or block attacks. Foot-thrusts should be thrown quickly but with enough force to knock an opponent off balance.

But of all of the techniques used in Muay Thai, it is perhaps the push kick or teep, which is the most underrated and perhaps also the most underutilized.The teep can not only enhance your over offensive and defensive capabilities, it can also play a huge part in breaking your opponent down mentally. And this is why fighters throughout history who have an exceptional knowledge of the teep excel tremendously in the ring not just in attacking and defending, but also in their entire posture of confidence. Being familiar with the different variations the teep will no doubt help you better understand the power, effect, and versatility of this incredible technique.

And if landed with enough power and on the right spot, a push kick can occasionally knock your opponent out.

Although fighters often throw the push kick to their opponent's hip, middle thigh, stomach, and neck, there are three main targets professionals will aim for time and again-the head, midsection, and knee.

Using the heel or whole foot comes
into play when there is only a small distance separating you and your opponent, such as in punching range. It doesn't cause as much pain as striking with the ball because of the increased surface area of your weapon, but it tends to be more powerful and you'll have less of a chance of missing when the whole foot is involved.

Push kicks to the face are more difficult to pull off because of the distance your weapon has to travel. But because And when landed to the face, this kick has knockout power.

If your opponent is walking forward with a wide-open guard, it is simply too good an opportunity to pass up.

MUAY THAI FOOT-THRUST (TEEP)

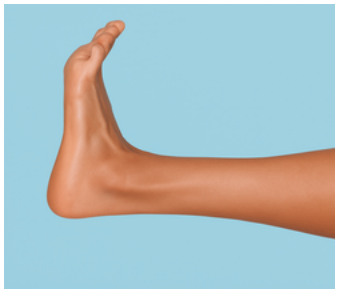
STRAIGHT FOOT THRUST

(ถีบตรง) Teep trong

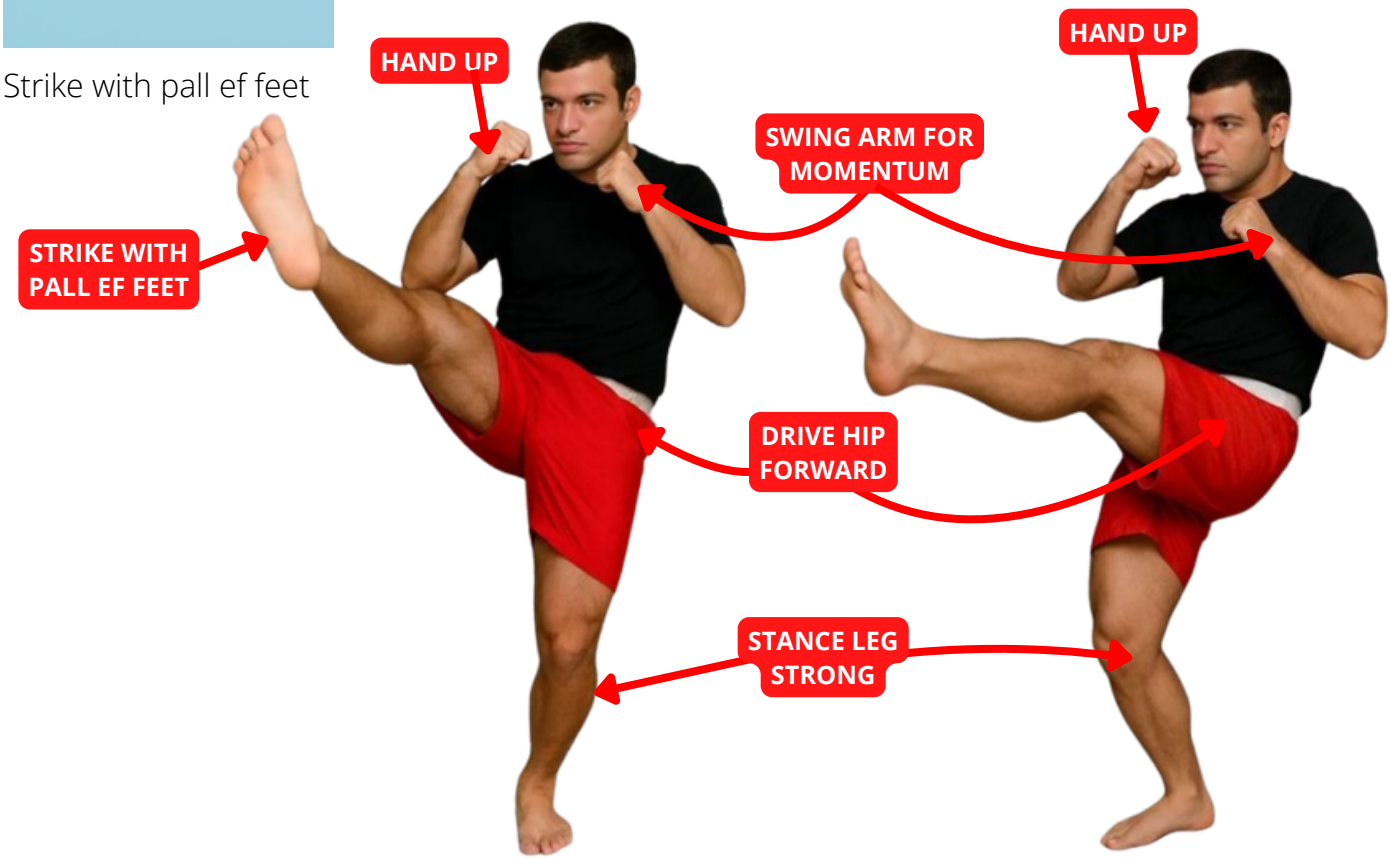
The straight foot-thrust, commonly known as the Teep (**ตีล**), is one of the most iconic and effective techniques in Muay Thai. It's often referred to as the "Muay Thai jab with the foot" because it controls distance, disrupts rhythm, and sets up more powerful strikes. The kick should be thrown with power and speed, but you have to be careful not to fall forward into the kick. Even if you miss, you want to retract your kick in the air and then drop your kicking foot back to its proper place in your stance. If you fall forward into the kick and your opponent throws an attack, you're going to get hit twice as hard.

How to Perform a Straight Teep:

Start in your Muay Thai stance.
Slightly shift weight to your rear leg (if using the lead leg) or vice versa. Lift your knee up, chambering the leg like you would for a front kick. Extend the leg forward, pushing through the ball of your foot (not the heel). Aim for the midsection, thigh, or hip. Retract the leg quickly and return to stance.
Do not let leg drop or fall after the impact. Re-bend and lift knee, then place left leg down in Muay Thai stance. Target on opponent can be the chest, stomach, waist, hips, upper legs, or head.



Strike with pall ef feet



MUAY THAI FOOT-THRUST (TEEP)

SIDEWAYS FOOT-THRUST

(**ถีบข้าง**) Teep khang

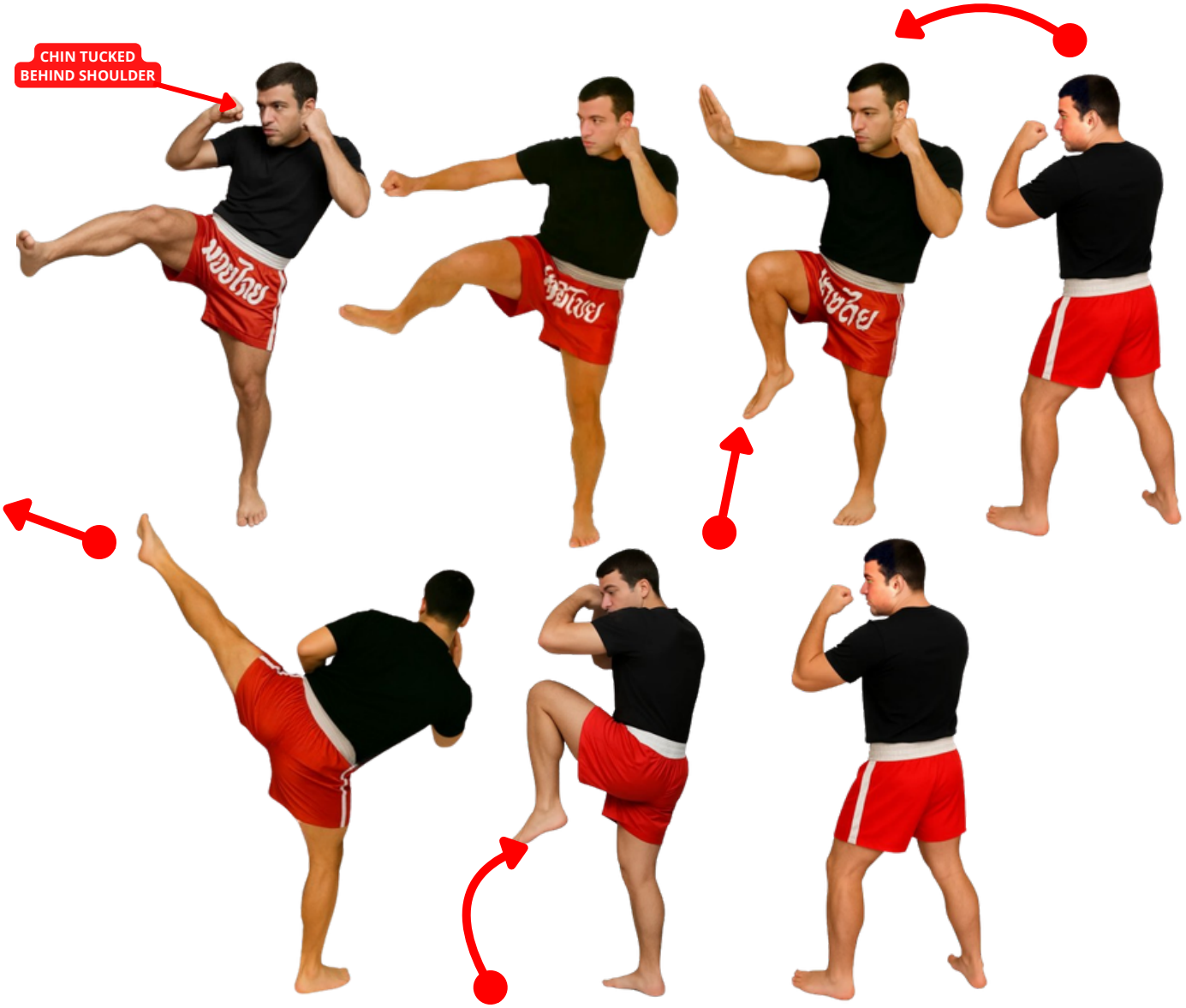
Side Teep / Side Push Kick

In Thai, it can fall under the broader term Teep Kang (**ทีปข้าง**), which means "side teep" or "side thrust. It's not as common as the front teep but can be extremely effective when timed correctly. The side kick is hard to land on a moving opponent, and as a result it isn't used that often in professional Thai boxing matches.

How to Perform a Sideways Foot-Thrust:

Start in stance with a good balance base.

Pivot slightly on your standing leg (back or front foot, depending on which leg you're using). Lift your knee like you're throwing a front teep. Turn your hips and extend the kicking leg sideways, aiming to push with the heel or blade of the foot. Lean away slightly for balance and reach.



MUAY THAI ELBOW (SOK)

HORIZONTAL ELBOW

(ศอกตัด) Sok tat

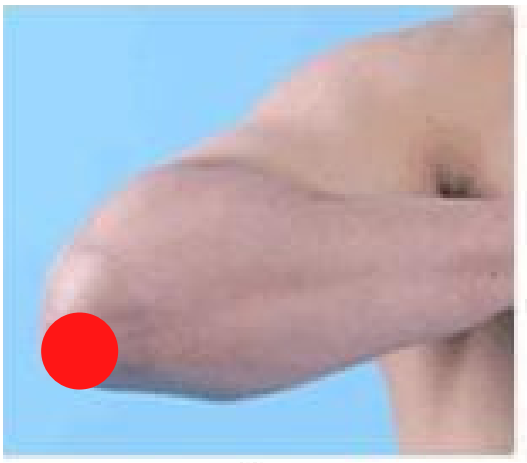
In Thai, it's called Sok Tat (**ศอกตัด**), meaning "cutting elbow" because it often slices open the skin when landed cleanly. This elbow travels in a horizontal path, similar to a hook punch, but it uses the tip or blade of the elbow.

How to Perform a Horizontal Elbow (Sok Tat):
Start in your stance (feet shoulder-width apart, hands high). Step in or pivot slightly if needed to close distance.

Bring your elbow out to the side at shoulder level.

Swing the elbow sideways across your body like throwing a hook punch, but much shorter and tighter. Turn your hips and shoulders into the motion for power. Keep your other hand up to protect your head.

POINT OF ELBOW HITTING TARGET
OPPOSITE HAND PROTECTING JAW
PULL OPPOSITE SHOULDER BACKWARDS
CHIN TUCKED BEHIND SHOULDER
PINKY FINGER FACING OUTWARD



Point of elbow hitting target

MUAY THAI ELBOW (SOK)

UPPERCUT ELBOW

(**ศอกงัด**) Sok ngat

The uppercut elbow (in Thai: Sok Ngat - **ศอกงัด**) is delivered in an upward motion, similar to a boxing uppercut, but using the tip or blade of the elbow rather than the fist. The sok ngad or uppercut elbow is one of the most diverse strikes of the Muay Thai elbows. It can be used as both a counter and an offensive attack coming forward towards your opponent. Attacking the nose and chin of the opponent.

How to Perform an Uppercut Elbow:

Stance & Range:
Start in your Muay Thai stance.
You must be very close to your opponent elbow range (within clinch or tight exchanges).

Movement:
Drop your elbow slightly. Explosively drive it upward at a 45 to 90-degree angle. Rotate your hips slightly for power.

MUAY THAI ELBOW (SOK)

FORWARD ELBOW THRUST

(**ศอกพุ่ง**) Sok Phung

A sok poong elbow is similar to the sok ngad elbow, but is thrown more like a spear than an uppercut. It's called the spear elbow, because you drive your arm forward like a spear to the nose, forehead, and collar bones.

MUAY THAI ELBOW (SOK)

ELBOW SLASH

(**ศอกตี** (**ศอกสับ**)) Sok ti

To throw the Sok Ti, you must raise the arm slightly angling the elbow slightly higher than your head and bend the elbow so that the upper forearm is almost touching the biceps and twist the shoulder while throwing the tip of the elbow downward in a 45 degree angle. The hip should be rotated inward at the same time the shoulder is twisted. This rotational momentum is what adds power to the strike.This strike can be thrown either from the leading arm or the rear arm. The leading throw (i.e. left elbow) is less powerful (than the rear, right elbow) but quicker to land and works great if your opponent steps towards you or leading with a jab then falling into the elbow right after.
It is one of the simplest elbows to land because it comes over the top of your opponent's hands. Even if your opponent has his hands up, it will be hard for him to stop all of the downward momentum in your attack. Sometimes all it takes is just a graze to open a cut that can stop the fight.

MUAY THAI ELBOW (SOK)

UPPERCUT ELBOW

(**ศอกงัด**) Sok ngat

The uppercut elbow can be thrown straight up at a ninety-degree angle or up at a forty-five degree angle, and deciding which angle to choose depends upon how you are positioned in relation to your opponent and the best line of attack at that par-ticular moment. Uppercut elbows don't pack that much power because of the short distance you have to gain momentum, but when hitting an opponent on the chin, it often doesn't take much to get a knockout. The technique will leave you well pro-tected against possible attacks, making it a rather safe technique to execute. It is most commonly used in the clinch when two fighters are struggling and swimming for a dominant position. A good uppercut elbow from within the clinch can put distance between you and your opponent, daze your opponent, or open your opponent up for other elbow strikes. It is also commonly employed as a counter against fighters who rush in to break the distance haphazardly. When the two momentums collide, the fight is often over.

(**ศอกงัด**) Sok ngat

MUAY THAI PLAM

CLINCHING

(**คลินช์**) Clinch

The clinch has two different fighting ranges. The first is where you are tied up with your opponent but there is still enough distance between the two of you to throw short-range attacks such as hooks, uppercuts, elbows, and knees. The second range, sometimes referred to as the smother range, is where either one or both of you are locked up in a tight hold, rendering upper-body attacks such as elbows and punches useless, leaving only short-range knees applicable. It is important that you become proficient in both ranges because the clinch is such an essential part of Muay Thai. Clinching ou chap kho is a way to move the opponent into the right position to place a knee “kick.” To execute this move, the arms, hips and footwork have to be completely harmonized. The catching of the head and trying to pull it down or sideways is the core of the movement. Foot and hip work are crucial to making it all work.

Clinching is the combination of techniques to prevent the opponent’s attack from pulling you down or sideways. With this, a system of attack and defense is created.

In the West, we have put pinching and choking in the movements. Looking in MMA, we see throws coming from clinching positions. In this book, I show a few techniques as most are only clear when you see the actual movements on film or during seminars/lessons.

Clinching is hard to describe from position to position and is much easier to understand in an actual exercise. The pictures used here show the most used forms, but there are many more situations. Teaching clinching is not easy. The trainer needs to understand the dangers of distance. Clinching is all about the right distance to control the opponent and to execute a knee technique. Speed is important, and clinching is often based on feeling and reflexes rather than visual contact because the first thing the opponent tries to do is limit your visual possibilities. You can see this clearly in the pictures.

With the accompanying pictures I try to give inside information in the way of professional clinching techniques. It is important to follow step by step and train every movement often. Good trainers are very important to lead you to the right positions.

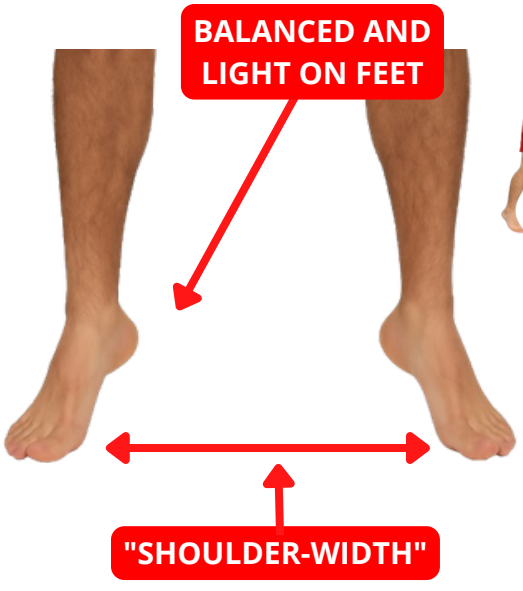
The front clinch should be performed with the palm of one hand on the back of the other. There are three reasons why the fingers must not be intertwined. 1) In the ring fighters are wearing boxing gloves and cannot intertwine their fingers. 2) The Thai front clinch involves pressing the head of the opponent downwards, which is easier if the hands are locked behind the back of the head instead of behind the neck. Furthermore, the arms should be putting as much pressure on the neck as possible. 3) A fighter may incur an injury to one or more fingers if they are intertwined, and it becomes more difficult to release the grip in order to quickly elbow the opponent's head.

During the battle for dominance, however, both fighters will still attempt throws and exchange attacks and counters. It should be seen as a fight within the fight. Your goal is to secure a dominant position, but while doing so you must continue to launch attacks.
In the standard tie-up:
Stay on the balls of your feet for balance. If you fall back on your heels, you'll be easily thrown or countered.
Be mindful of foot placement relative to your opponent. Aim to have at least one foot outside of his lead foot. Otherwise, you'll be easier to off-balance and vulnerable to attacks.
Keep your feet about shoulder-width apart—spreading out too much jeopardizes your balance.
Maintain an upright body and strong posture. Keep your chin tucked and shoulders raised to protect yourself from elbows and make it harder for your opponent to get a solid grip behind your head.
The first is with the hand clasp, in which the top of one hand is resting on the palm of the other, Both hands are open and pressed tightly against the back of your opponent's skull. If your opponent has a strong neck and you're having trouble pulling his head down, try digging your elbows into his collarbones, causing him to buckle under the pain.

DOUBLE HEAD GRAB

The double head grab is a tie-up used to control opponent and defend in the plum/ clinch.
Place both hands palm over palm above opponent's neck and on back of opponent's head on round area of opponent's skull. "Cup" back of opponent's head with palms facing you in a palm over palm position. Do not lock fingers or grab.
Stand up straight and push hips forward against opponent's hips with no gaps between you and opponent. Place feet shoulder-width apart with both feet pointed out. Distribute weight evenly between both legs. Stay on balls of feet with heels raised.
Use arms for forward and backward balance and feet for left and right balance.
From the tie-up, "hang" weight on opponent forcing opponent to deal with the extra weight when opponent maneuvers.A correct clinch also involves the fighter's forearms pressing against the opponent's collar bone while the hands are around the opponent's head rather than the opponent's neck.

DO NOT LOCK FINGERS OR GRAB



The general way to get out of a clinch is to push the opponent's head backward or elbow them, as the clinch requires both participants to be very close to one another. Additionally, the non-dominant clincher can try to "swim" their arm underneath and inside the opponent's clinch, establishing the previously non-dominant clincher as the dominant clincher. When grabbing the opponent some treining are of the opinion that the nakmuay should move the hips in toward the opponent quickly and tightly. You must do this in order to thwart any knee attacks the opponent may counter.

CLINCH ESCAPE: A “clinch escape” (in Muay Thai, plam) involves different techniques, depending on whether you want to break free, counterattack, or reposition to gain advantage. Here are some of the main ways used:

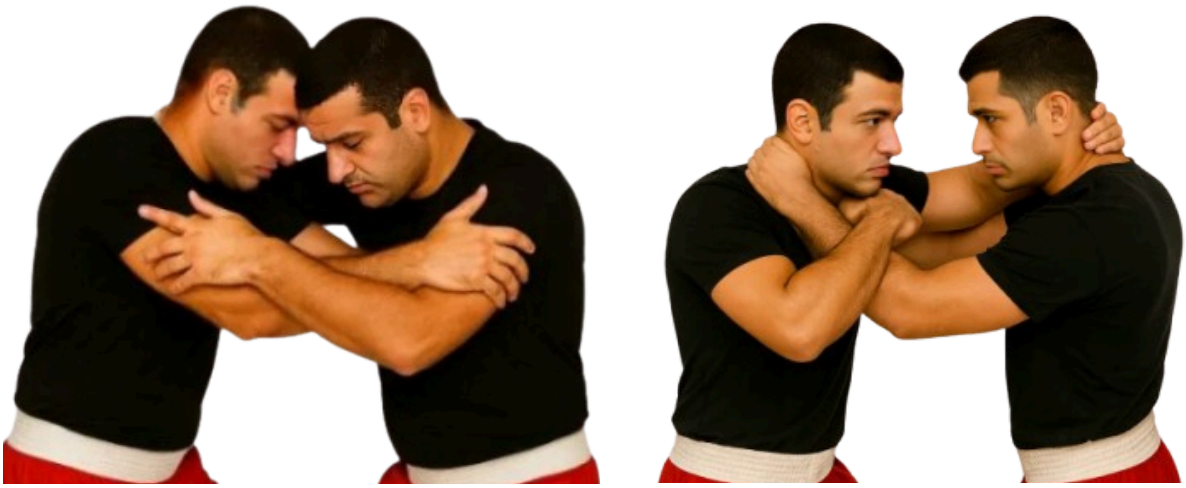
Head Control: Use your hand on the opponent’s chin or the back of the neck to push the head backward or downward. This breaks balance and makes it easier to escape the clinch.

Step-Back Escape: Simple and direct: take a strong step back while using your hands to push your opponent’s arms away. Works when there is no strong neck control.

Cross-Face: Place your forearm against the opponent’s cheek or neck, pushing sideways. This forces them to release and creates striking distance.

If you are able to swim your hands to the inside of your opponent's arms, then you have reached a dominant position from which you can easily maneuver your opponent and throw him off balance, giving you numerous options.Now that you control hishead, you also control his body, which opens up knee strikes as well.

Arm Break: Place your forearm inside your opponent's arm. Push outward, creating space to turn or step away. Often combined with a lateral step.



You must also remember that the opponent will be trying to get hold of your head, arms and even the body by moving from the outside to the inside position. Additionally, the non-dominant clincher can try to "swim" their arm underneath and inside the opponent's clinch, establishing the previously non-dominant clincher as the dominant clincher.

In the clinch, the fighter who controls the inside position usually has better control over the opponent's head, shoulders, and balance. The forearms press against the inside of the opponent's arms while the hands may connect behind the head, neck, or upper back. This position also makes it harder for the opponent to land clean knees or rotate out of the clinch.

The fighter pulls the opponent down with their torso and head, while simultaneously projecting their hips forward and explosively raising their knee. The impact can strike the abdomen, ribs, or chest, causing intense physical strain and creating opportunities for new sequences.

The knee strike in the clinch is one of the most effective weapons in Muay Thai for close-range combat. Executed from a controlled clinch, it combines strength, balance, and precision.

The practitioner establishes control by wrapping their arms around the opponent's torso from underneath the arms. The opponent then lowers their base and pushes the arms downward, creating space to escape the initial control.

MUAY THAI KNEE (TI KHAO)

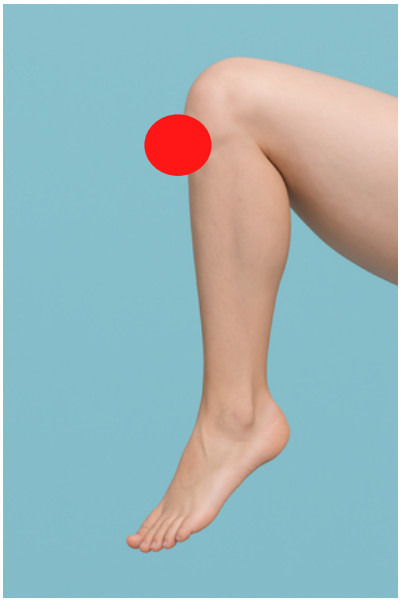
FRONT KNEE / STRAIGHT KNEE STRIKE

(เข่าตรง) Khao trong

The front knee strike also known as the straight knee or Muay Thai knee (Khao Trong – **เข่าตรง**) is a fundamental and powerful technique in Muay Thai. It's used for both offense and defense, targeting the body to damage, exhaust, or even knock out your opponent.
It's a linear, forward-driving knee strike, delivered up the middle like a spear usually into the opponent's abdomen, solar plexus, or chest.

How to Perform a Straight Knee:
Start in your Muay Thai stance.

Bring your rear or lead leg up and forward, bending at the knee.
As your knee rises, thrust your hips forward this gives the strike penetration and power.
Point the toes down and drive the knee straight into the target.
Lean your upper body back slightly for balance and to maximize reach.
Keep your guard up or use your arms to control the opponent's head/arms (especially in the clinch).



MUAY THAI KNEE (TI KHAO)

SIDE KNEE

(เข่าโค้ง) Khao Khong

In Muay Thai, the term “Side Knee” refers to a knee strike delivered from the side, usually targeting the opponent’s ribs or the lateral area of the torso. The side knee is best utilized while fighting for position in the clinch. When done right, it can disrupt your opponent's breathing and score points with the judges.

Technical Characteristics:

Position: The fighter slightly rotates the hip to the side.
Execution: The knee rises at a lateral angle instead of going straight forward (as in the Khao Trong – front knee). To perform this technique, bring your knee up on the outside of your opponent's body and then drive the side of your knee into his midsection or the side of his thigh.
Target: Ribs, side of the abdomen, or even the opponent’s thigh when in the clinch.
Common Use: Frequently applied in the clinch to strike the side of the body when there is no space for a front knee..

Left Side Knee

Right Side Knee

MUAY THAI KNEE (TI KHAO)

DIAGONAL KNEE STRIKE

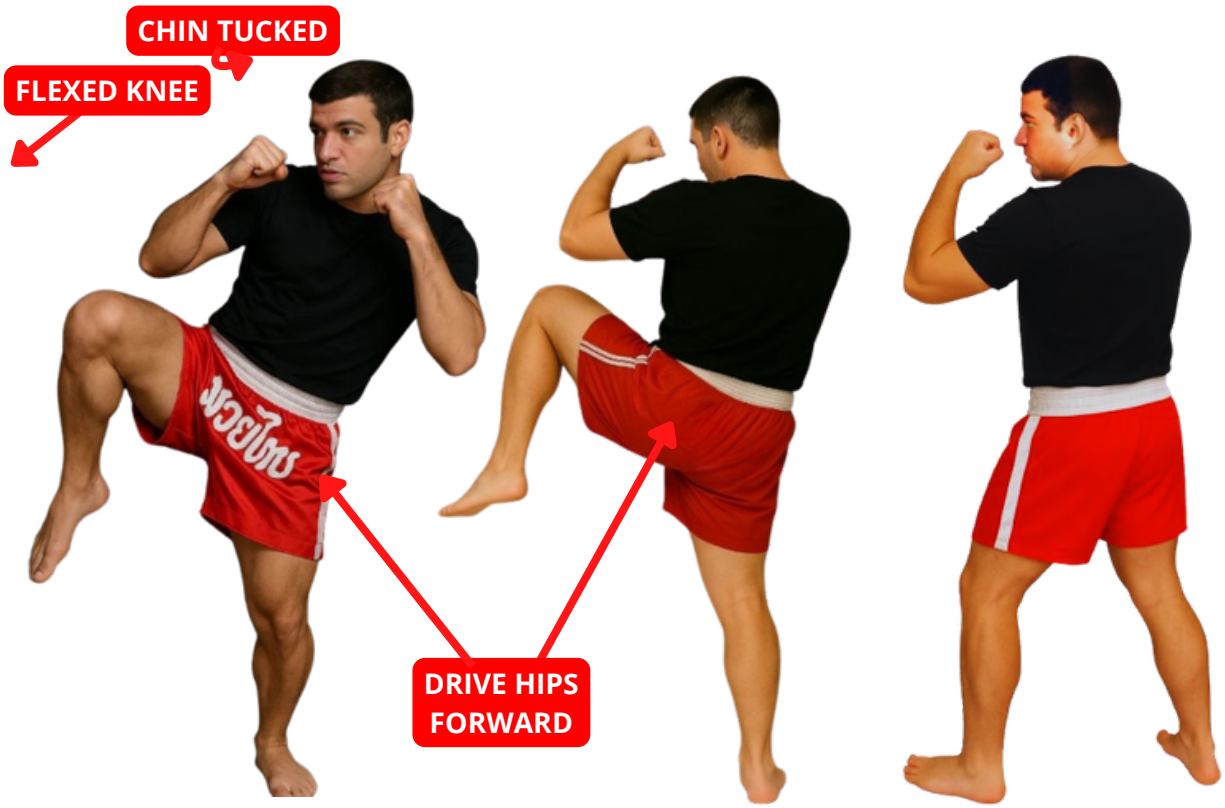
(**เข่าเฉียง**) Khao chiang

The diagonal knee strike in Muay Thai, called Khao Chiang (**เข่าเฉียง**) is a versatile and highly effective strike that comes in at an angle, rather than straight up the middle like the front knee.
It's delivered upward and at an angle, targeting the opponent's ribs, side of the body, or upper legs. It's often used in clinch fighting, during exchanges, or to exploit open angles in the opponent's defense.

How to Perform a Diagonal Knee:
Start in stance or clinch.

Lift your knee diagonally across your body.

If using the right knee, aim up and to the left.
If using the left knee, aim up and to the right.
Thrust the hip forward as you drive the knee into the target.
The motion is a mix of vertical and horizontal like a knee thrown in a V shape.
Return to stance quickly for defense or follow-ups.



MUAY THAI KNEE (TI KHAO)

FLYING KNEE STRIKE

(**เข่าลอย**) Khao loy

A flying knee (known as hanuman thayarn in Muay Thai, and sometimes called a jumping knee) is a knee strike very similar to a front knee, except that it is performed in stand-up fighting by jumping, and often by rushing towards the opponent.
Start in a proper Muay Thai fighting stance, with your hands protecting your face, chin down, elbows close to the body, and your feet balanced. Slightly bend your knees and prepare your body to explode upward. Shift your weight onto the supporting leg and raise the knee of the kicking leg as if you were starting a regular roundhouse kick. Then, push off the floor with the supporting leg and perform a quick jump. While you are in the air, rotate your hips strongly toward the target. This hip rotation is what gives the kick power. Extend the kicking leg in a circular motion and strike the target mainly with the shin, which is the preferred striking surface in Muay Thai. After the impact, quickly retract the leg, land with control, and return immediately to your fighting stance, ready to defend or continue attacking.

MUAY THAI BLOCK

BLOCK KICK

IIn Muay Thai, blocking low kicks and middle kicks is essential for both defense and counterattack. Low and mid body roundhouse kicks are normally blocked with the upper portion of a raised shin (this block is known as a "check").Here are the main blocks: Blocking is a critical element in muay Thai and compounds the level of conditioning a successful practitioner must possess. Low and mid body roundhouse kicks are normally blocked with the upper portion of a raised shin (this block is known as a "check"). You can adjust the angle and level of the shield to ensure contact with the strike on the shin area.

LOW KICK BLOCK

Target: thigh or calf

How to block:

Lift the front or rear leg, with the knee slightly bent.
Rotate the hip outward. Use the shin to absorb the impact, positioning it at an angle. Tip: Keep your hands up in guard while blocking with the leg.

MIDDLE KICK BLOCK

Target: ribs or abdomen

How to block:

Use both the forearm and shin (double block). Slightly turn the torso into the kick to reduce impact. Elbow points downward to protect the ribs. Tip: Don’t absorb the kick with a loose arm; proper positioning and firmness are key.

Front Blocking
Tham Kan Bang Thip
(ทำการบังถีบ)

External Blocking
Khao Bang Nok
(เขาบางนก)

Internal Blocking
Khao Bang Noi (**เขาบางน้อย**)

BLOCO SHIN "KAO BANG" (**เข่าบัง**)

Front Blocking

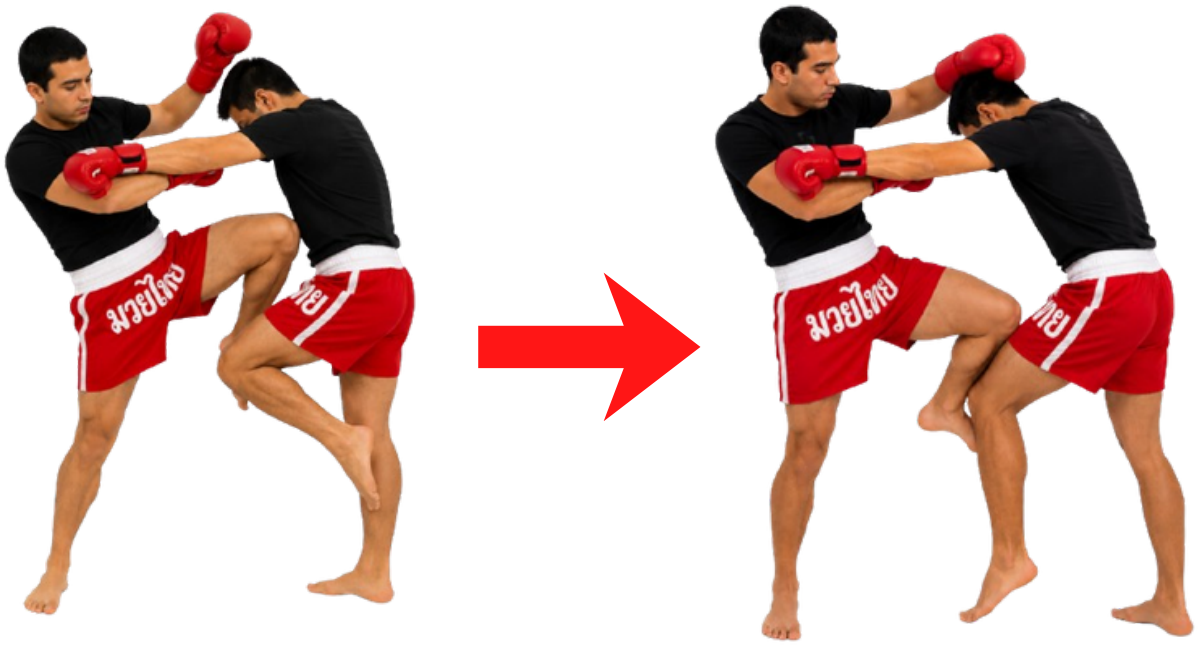
External Blocking

Internal Blocking

MUAY THAI BLOCK

BLOCKING KNEE

The Blocking Knee is a basic Muay Thai clinch defense used when your opponent has dominant control, such as the body lock or double collar tie. Instead of trying to overpower the opponent, the goal is to neutralize the knee strike before it gains momentum and impact.
When the opponent begins to lift the knee, slightly lower your center of gravity and tighten your core. Bring your leg inward to intercept the attacking leg with your thigh or shin, creating a physical barrier that blocks the knee from landing cleanly. At the same time, maintain balance by keeping your posture upright and your feet grounded.
Your arms should continue fighting for inside control while your head stays protected and close to the opponent's chest or shoulder. Avoid leaning backward, because this can break your balance and make you vulnerable to follow-up knees or sweeps.
After successfully blocking the knee, immediately work to improve your clinch position. You can pummel for inside control, turn the opponent off balance, create space to escape the clinch, or counter with your own knee strike.
The Blocking Knee is not meant to completely stop the opponent's pressure, but rather to reduce damage, disrupt rhythm, and create an opportunity to regain positional advantage in the clinch.



MUAY THAI GUARD

GUARD

In Muay Thai, the "guard" refers to the fighter's defensive stance. There are various guard types, each serving specific purposes whether to maintain distance, absorb strikes, or set up counterattacks. Punches are blocked with an ordinary boxing guard and techniques similar, if not identical, to basic boxing technique.

HIGH GUARD

Description: Hands close to the face, elbows tucked in protecting the body. Purpose: Defense against punches and elbows. Very common in traditional Muay Thai. Advantage: Strong frontal protection. Punches are blocked with an ordinary boxing guard and techniques similar, if not identical, to basic boxing technique.

LONG GUARD

Description: The lead hand is extended forward with the arm partially stretched, while the rear hand covers the chin.Purpose: Maintains distance, measures the opponent, frustrates attacks, and sets up counters.

DIAMOND GUARD

Description: Arms crossed in front of the face with elbows pointing forward. Purpose: Protects both the head and body at the same time.

Long Guard "yan" (**ย่าน**)

Diamond Guard

Long Guard

Cross Guard

High Guard

Boxing Guard

High Guard

Boxing Guard

MUAY THAI DEFENSE

DEFENSE

(**เอนกายหลบตีน**) Anekay Lob Tin

Defensively, the concept of "wall of defence" is used, in which shoulders, arms and legs are used to hinder the attacker from successfully executing techniques. Blocking is a critical element in muay Thai and compounds the level of conditioning a successful practitioner must possess.

Evasion moving the body out of the way or range of a strike so the defender has to move close again to counter-attack, e.g. defender jumping laterally or back from attacker's kicks.

Blocking defender's hard blocks to stop a strike in its path so preventing it reaching its target

LEAN BACK DEFENSE

The lean back defense is an evasive technique that is used to avoid a high kick. Rather than blocking a kick with your leg, the lean back takes the target completely out of reach from the kick. This means zero damage is taken. It also creates an excellent opportunity to counter attack. Contrary to the traditional Lean Back defense, where the hand on the front leg side remains extended, we opted for this variation where the hand on the side of the kicking leg stays by the head, protecting the face.

Lean Back Defense

Lean Back Defense

Lean Back Defense

High body strikes are blocked ideally with the forearms and shoulder together, or if enough time is allowed for a parry, the glove (elusively), elbow, or shin will be used.
Hooks are often blocked with a motion sometimes described as "combing the hair", that is, raising the elbow forward and effectively shielding the head with the forearm, flexed biceps and shoulder. A common means of blocking a punch is using the hand on the same side as the oncoming punch. For example, if an orthodox fighter throws a jab (being the left hand), the defender will Front Block.

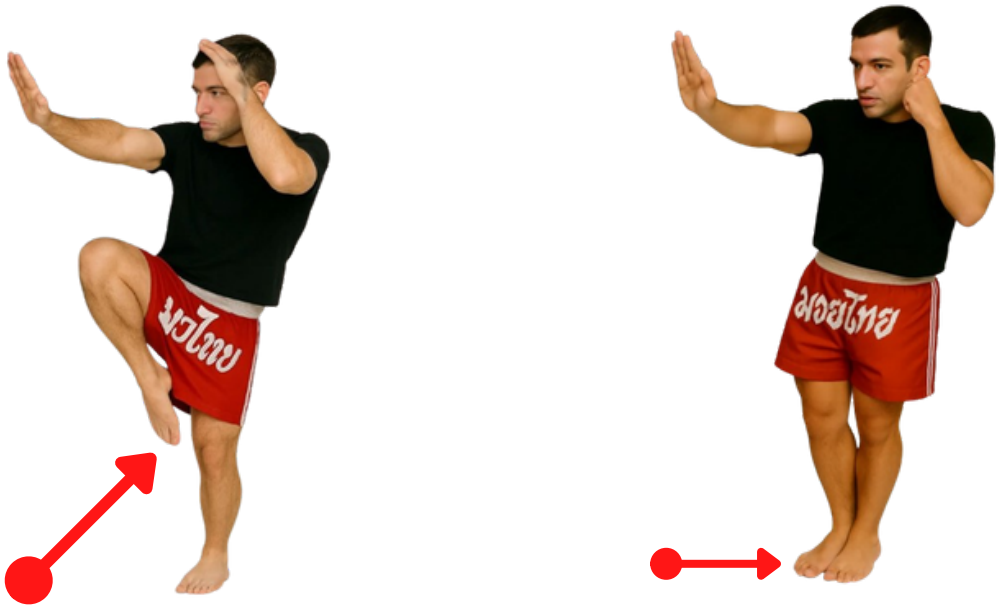
Front Punch Defense

High Punch Defense (Combing The Hair) "Bit" (ปิด)

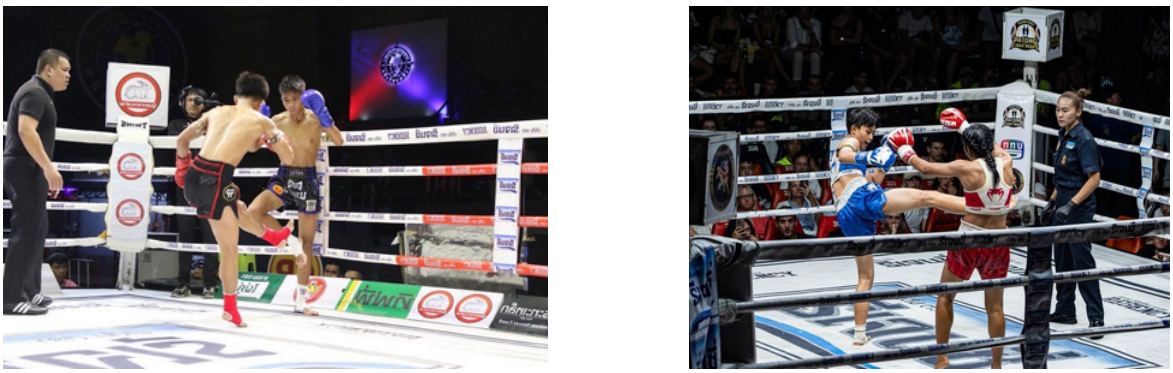
High Punch Defense and Kick

Avoidance – moving a body part out of the way or range of a strike so the defender remains in range for a counter-strike. For example, the defender moves their front leg backward to avoid the attacker's low kick, then immediately counters with a roundhouse kick

Stepping Out of the Way - For most low kicks, merely stepping out of the way and making your opponent miss will give you an opening to attack. Those openings usually don't last very long, so to capitalize on them you must have good timing and judgment. First you must be able to spot the opening, then know what attacks will be able to slip through that opening, and finally you must have the coordination and quickness to launch your attack without hesitation. If you miss your window, your opponent will either launch another attack or return to his normal stance.



Stepping Out of the Way



Stepping Out of the Way

MUAY THAI TRAINING

PAO

(**เป้า**) Pao

It is the most common term used for the pads held by trainers during Muay Thai training sessions for practicing kicks, punches, knee strikes, and elbow strikes. (**แผ่นรับแรงมวยไทย**) Phèn Rap Raeng Muay Thai – Muay Thai impact-absorbing pad/protector

Cross Right

Cross Left

Jab

Straight

Jab and Straight

Uppercut Right

Uppercut Left

Straight Right and Cross Left

Uppercut Right and Cross Left

Uppercut Elbow Right

Uppercut Elbow Left

Roundhouse Kick Left

Roundhouse Kick Right

Half-shin, Half-knee Kick Left

Half-shin, Half-knee Kick Right

Curving Knee Strike Left

Curving Knee Strike Right

Straight Knee Strike Left

Straight Knee Strike Right

Jab and Straight Knee Strike Right

Horizontal Knee Strike Right

Horizontal Knee Strike Left

Straight Foot-Thrust Left

Straight Foot-Thrust Right

Position of the poas for strikes (teep): Straight foot-thrust, Sideways foot-thrust, Reverse foot-thrust, Slapping foot-thrust and Jumping foot-thrust

MUAY THAI TRAINING

BALLY PAD

(**เบลลี่แพด**) Belly Pad - (**เกราะป้องกันหน้าท้อง**) Krao Pongkan Na Thong - Abdominal Protector

A Belly Pad is an abdominal protector used by trainers during pad work and striking drills. It protects the abdomen, ribs, and solar plexus from knees, front kicks (teeps), punches, and other body strikes.

Main Advantages

- Protection against knees and body kicks.
- Allows more realistic Muay Thai training.
- Maintains the trainer's mobility during training.
- Can be used together with Thai pads and focus mitts.

Cross Right

Cross Left

Punch Straight

Straight Knee Strike Left

Straight Knee Strike Right

Straight Knee Strike Clinch

Straight Kick Strike

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ALEXANDRE BRECK

Alexandre Breck is the third generation of fighters in his family, having begun his fight journey at the age of five. With dedication and passion, he developed profound knowledge of rules, history, and fighting techniques, combining practice and research throughout his unique path.

Internationally recognized, Breck has written and published articles in fight magazines and online platforms across the globe, contributing to the growth and appreciation of combat sports. His mission is to share knowledge, preserve traditions, and inspire future generations of fighters and researchers.

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